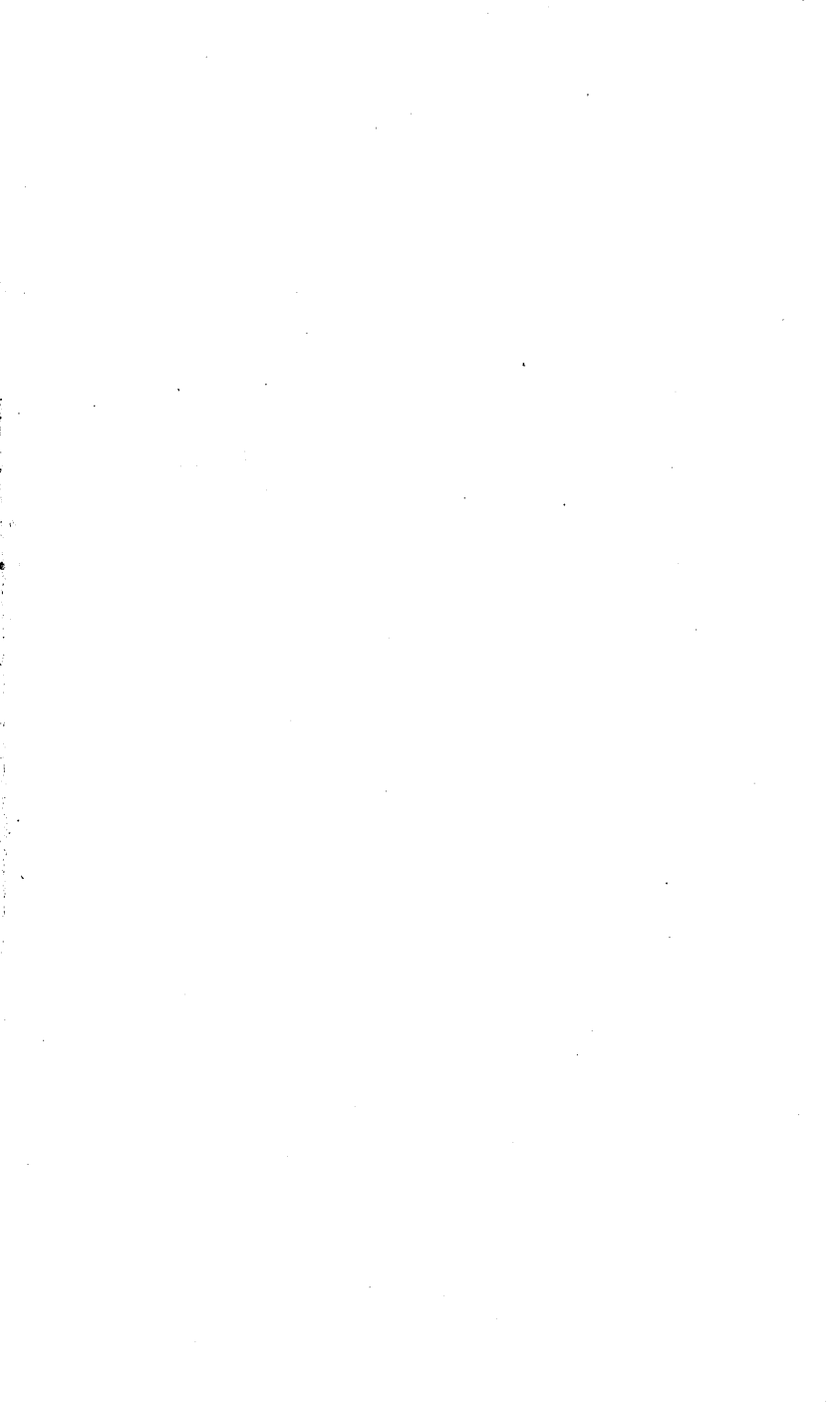


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**SHALL WE STAND BY
THE CHURCH?
A DISPASSIONATE INQUIRY**



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SHALL WE STAND BY THE CHURCH?

A DISPASSIONATE INQUIRY

BY

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TO MY FELLOW-MEMBERS
OF THE
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
FEARLESS IN CRITICISM BUT STRONG IN FAITH
THEY ARE STANDING BY THE CHURCH

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The following chapters have been given as lectures at various conferences and conventions. Most of them have been published in periodicals; my thanks for permission to reprint are due to the publishers of *The Hibbert Journal*, *The American Journal of Theology*, *The International Journal of Ethics*, *The Biblical World*, *The Homiletic Review*, *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology, and Scientific Methods*, *Religious Education*; to the American Unitarian Association, which published one of the chapters in pamphlet form; and to the American Sociological Society, which published another chapter in its volume of proceedings for 1919.

The essays gathered from these quarters have a unity of viewpoint and argument, which is the result of a long and earnest study of the potentialities and shortcomings of the churches, and, in particular, in recent years, an interest in the constructive work of the Religious Education Association. Suggestions and criticisms have come from sources too numerous to mention, but in particular from colleagues and pupils at the University of Illinois, Wesleyan University, and Vassar College. Many letters received from readers of my "Problems of Religion" have urged the formulation of such an argument as this; and indeed it may be considered as a sort of practical postscript to that volume.

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SHALL WE STAND BY THE CHURCH?

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: THE PRESENT CRISIS

THE epoch that has begun with the termination of the Great War is to be a period of reconstruction. Industrial, political, international institutions are being scrutinized, and subjected to a criticism more searching than ever before. Education, art, literature, marriage, the press, the courts — there is loose in the world the spirit that would prove all things, in order to hold fast only to that which is good. It is clear that the Church cannot escape its pitiless searchlight.

Indeed, we must face the fact that many critics — and by no means merely the temperamental scoffers, the worldly minded, and the disgruntled — have already returned their verdict that the Church is, on the whole, a menace to our society, or at least a futile and hopeless cumberer of the ground. A considerable hostility to the Church has arisen among the masses, and among the “intellectuals”; there is widespread sneering at its pretensions and impatience at its lack of leadership in the moral crisis of the age. Furthermore, many of the gentlest of our people, many of our most useful citizens, remain outside its ministrations, in spite of continued efforts to bring them into the fold. There are some fifty million peo-

ple in the United States — about half the population — who are not identified with any church. The annual increase in membership is far less than it used to be; and in 1919 there is said to have been actually a slight decrease. Attendance at service has fallen off, in proportion to the population, more rapidly than membership. These signs point at least to a widespread dissatisfaction, and presumably to some fault in an institution which, like all others, exists to meet and satisfy a human need.

To aid in a clearer apprehension of this crisis in the life of the Church, it will be useful to cite a few representative statements chosen almost at random from contemporary utterances unfavorable to its claims.

Professor J. S. Schapiro, writing in the *Atlantic Monthly* for June, 1920, declares that "the intellectual . . . does not pay the church the compliment of being hostile to her . . . he simply ignores it as a force incapable of good or evil."

Another writer, in the August, 1920, number of this same periodical (by no means a radical or anti-clerical publication!), in picturing the attitude of contemporaries to the Church, makes one speaker say, "The day was, when the 'world' was full of darkness and the Church full of light, but now the 'world' has a clearer moral vision than the Church." Another speaker says, "To tell you the truth, I don't think I ever met a man before who cared what a parson says."

The historian, in H. B. Mitchell's *Talks on Religion*, puts it thus: "One rarely treats a pulpit utterance seriously in these days. You take it as part of the ceremony, part of what is expected, and so without significance, like the formal inanities of social intercourse. . . . It would seem to me that the pulpit

would be the last place in the world from which to start a genuine reform, and that the Church must be more of a hindrance than a help."

Mr. H. G. Wells, in *God, the Invisible King*, wrote: "The history of Christianity, with its encrustation and suffocation in dogmas and usages, its dire persecutions of the faithful by the unfaithful, its desiccation and its unlovely decay, its invasion by robes and rites and all the tricks and vices of the Pharisees whom Christ detested and denounced, is full of warning against the dangers of a Church." And in his *Italy, France and Britain at War* he surveyed the situation in these lands and reached this conclusion: "What I conceive to be the reality of the religious revival is to be found in quarters remote from the religious professionals."

Bernard Shaw is more specific in his criticism: "The religious bodies . . . are a sort of auxiliary police, taking off the insurrectionary edge of poverty with coals and blankets, bread and treacle, and soothing and cheering the victims with hopes of immense and inexpensive happiness in another world when the process of working them to death in the service of the rich is complete in this." (*Preface to Major Barbara*.)

The Communist Party in the United States makes a similar indictment, in its official platform, denouncing the Church as an institution that "befuddles the minds of the masses and defends the capitalistic order." Similar criticisms are found *passim* in the literature of all the radical political groups, and barely escaped being incorporated into the platform of the Socialist Party in the spring of 1920.

A writer in the *New Republic* recently declared

that "there are already large numbers of people to whom the ecclesiastical system is a vexation and an offense." He speaks in particular of "its economic inefficiency, its aimlessness of programme, the hosts of agents employed in inconsequential effort, its veritable army of retainers riding on the government-administered thoroughfares at half the tariff rates paid by the people, its enormous accumulations of wealth invested in massive structures standing often absolutely unused for any purpose during all but three or four hours in the week." And — to close this list of indictments — a valuable book lately published by Henry Sturt, called *The Idea of a Free Church*, begins its opening chapter as follows: "The task which the present book proposes is to suggest a religion and a church more satisfactory than the Christian. It is inspired by the conviction that our established religion is now utterly insufficient to satisfy a thoughtful mind, and that all progress, moral and intellectual, demands that Christianity should be given up and replaced by something better."

Some of these critics condemn not only the Church but Christianity. However, they quite universally mean by Christianity the religion as it is commonly taught by the churches and practised by church-going people. If we are to accept the point of view of the author of *The Religion of Christ in the Twentieth Century*, and admit that, by and large, the religion of Christ has never really been tried (Bernard Shaw has repeated this asseveration in the preface to *Androcles and the Lion*), we must apply their strictures not to the founder of the religion but to the institution that, if their criticisms are well founded, misrepresents his spirit and teaching. Moreover,

not only are most of the keenest critics of the Church reverent in their attitude toward Jesus, but many of them are staunch supporters of the Church, which, by candid criticism, they hope to awaken to her faults and her unused opportunities. Indeed, many of the truest Christians are most dissatisfied with the Church. To quote a writer in *Harper's Magazine* for August, 1920, "To-day there are perhaps more seekers for spiritual things outside the Church than in it. What is more startling is this: There are perhaps as many normal Christians outside the Church as in it." In short, to be a Christian is not of necessity to approve the Church; nor is a loyalty to her incompatible with the liveliest appreciation of her mistakes.

It is high time, then, that the churches took more seriously the defection of so many whose fathers and mothers stood in their ranks; that church people listened in a humbler spirit to the moralists and public-spirited citizens, and even to the half-inarticulate murmurs of the alienated classes, who find the Church futile or positively harmful in her influence. Where there is so much smoke there must be some fire; where so many, of different walks and different interests, condemn, or quietly pass by on the other side, there must be something — probably a number of things — wrong. Instead of remaining obstinately sure of herself, and condemning those who flout her or plead with her or ignore her, the Church should be willing to profit by criticism, study the times, and seek to adjust her ideals and her program to the needs of the people to whom she exists to minister.

The plant of the churches in the United States represents an investment of billions of dollars. Their up-keep costs perhaps four hundred million dollars a year.

Approximately a quarter of a million men are kept from other productive work to be their ministers and priests. Probably a million other men and women give of their time and energy for their service. Surely the public has a right to scrutinize this expenditure of money and productive power. What does it accomplish? Is the accomplishment commensurate with the expenditure? Could more efficient results be obtained by any reform in aims or methods? Is there some result that we could reasonably expect from this great institution that is not being adequately attained? More insistently than ever these questions are bound to be asked during the coming years; churchmen themselves must ask them, and seek in a spirit of genuine humility and open-mindedness for the answers.

Many books are written in defence of the Church. A few are written to attack her. And many who do not care to undertake that ungracious task give no expression to their impatience or sadness or disgust. The purpose of this little volume is neither to attack nor to defend, but to examine impartially, as if it fits a lifelong student of philosophy, and to seek, if it may be found, a way to avoid the pitfalls in which the churches have so often fallen, a way that shall lead straighter to the goal upon which the churches, with all their sins, have more or less steadily kept their eyes.

The Christian Church — what part is it to play in the civilization of the future? Only the future can tell. There is much in its past record that needs forgiveness; there is much in its present attitude (taking "the Church" to mean a composite photograph of the many existing churches) that arouses legitimate vexation. But there is much, very much in its record in which to glory, and limitless potential

alities before it. The time ahead of us is a critical period. If the churches are content to jog along in the ruts of a past generation, they will become more and more the refuge of superstition, the support of reaction, and a source of mere selfish personal consolation to their members. If, on the other hand, they frankly welcome the vivifying breath of the new winds that are astir in the world, if they listen to the voices that are summoning them to their high calling, they may again be a mighty force for righteousness in the land, and have a future even greater than their past.

CHAPTER TWO

DO WE NEED THE CHURCH?

BEFORE taking up for examination the various criticisms which are currently made of the Church, we should raise the prior question, Do we need the Church at all? Is it a necessary institution, like the school? Just what does it exist for, what is the good of it?

The traditional answer is that the Church exists to save souls. This phrase has an antique flavor about it that is repugnant to many to-day; and no wonder, in view of the smug sacramentalism, the orgiastic revivalism, and the self-seeking individualism that it so readily connotes. But if the phrase be interpreted in the spirit of modern psychology, it may well serve as a label for one aspect, and that perhaps the most important, of the work of the Church. The prime function of any church is to save each individual whom it can reach, if by any means it can save him, from the pitfalls of life, from his blindness and weakness, from the many dangerous influences that play upon him, from all sorts of false ideals and distorted conceptions of value.

But playing safe is, after all, a poor ideal for a man or woman of spirit. Why not put the mission of the Church in more positive terms? The Church exists to show men how to live, and to furnish them the dynamic. There is a Way that saves, a solution for the baffling problem of human life; a Way that

gives life meaning, worth, scope, the highest usefulness, freedom and power. The Church exists to hold up to men that ideal, that vision, to mould the undirected, or misdirected, energies of men, to actualize their dormant potentialities of good, to stir in them a best which they might not otherwise have known was in them. It exists to rouse men continually out of their torpor, to keep alive in them the sense of the importance of common duties, and make them care to keep true.

Now this is not all that the Church exists to do. But surely this is enough, if the Church can do it with any measurable success, to justify its existence. The one thing above all else that will save this nation and the world is that men shall be trained to have a conscience and an unselfish intent. No other widespread institution exists to this end. It is, at least in our western civilization, the prime duty and privilege of the Christian Church to undertake this supreme task.

There is, however, we must be clear-sighted and candid enough to admit, a great blunder that has beset this task of spiritualization, and done much to negative the value of the Church. That is the error of letting men suppose that salvation can be effected by some magical rite or ceremony, or mere profession of belief; and that once salvation is effected they can congratulate themselves and feel safe. This expectation of miracle, and complacency of status, we must vigorously combat. Salvation is not so lightly attained, or retained. It implies an attainment of character, a purification of the will, which normally requires earnest effort and long perseverance in well-doing; and though it be true that it is the power of God that saves, we must remember that God

helps those who help themselves — or rather, God helps men *through* their helping themselves.

Moreover, salvation, observably, is a matter of degree. No one is enough saved. The traditional dichotomy — sheep on one side of the fence, goats on the other — is unreal; it is not only inconsonant with the spirit of democracy and fair play, it is hopelessly out of touch with psychology, or, for that matter, with everyday observation. There is no privileged caste of the elect. No one can tell when his feet may lead him into the paths of sin. However safe from stumbling we may feel ourselves, we must not slacken our effort; eternal vigilance is the price of salvation.

We cannot, then, too bluntly say that there is no *intrinsic* value in baptism, in joining the Church and partaking of its communion, in confessing Christ, saying one's prayers, or attending services. These are but so many *means* to the end of cleansing and strengthening the will, and valuable only if and in so far as they actually serve that end. It is of no use for a church to point to the number of its communicants, or to a large attendance at worship; the only ultimate test of its success is — what kind of people is it making out of these? Many who perform these rites and ceremonies are not thereby saved, either from making a sorry mess of their own lives or from helping to make a mess of our corporate life. Hence we must beware of all things most, the substitution of unction in churchmanship for unselfishness and purity of conduct in the week-day life. *The task of the Church is not to get members, it is to Christianize them.* And except as it succeeds in actually making them live in the Christian Way, it has failed in its job.

As a matter of fact, it is much to be doubted if

any of the means above referred to are sufficient for the actual Christianizing of most people. Most people never have been Christianized. We must, therefore, begin our detailed criticism of the work of the Church by considering what means are available for what we have variously called the saving, the Christianizing, or the spiritual inspiration and guidance of men. But before taking up that chief aspect of the Church's task, let us complete our preliminary conspectus of the functions of the Church.

If we call what we have been discussing the Spiritualizing Function of the Church, we may say that it has also, in practice, an Educational Function. The Church exists, we are told, to teach men the truth about religion and kindred matters. This is, no doubt, a less important function of the Church than in the day before we had so many books and periodicals, the day when the minister was almost the only educated man in the community, and the Church, for the mass of people, almost the sole educational institution. But even now the schools are not free to teach along these lines, and there are many who read little. For millions, the Church is the chief source of ideas on the ultimate problems of human life.

The Church must certainly beware of supposing that correct theological beliefs are anything like as important as right conduct. However interesting and absorbing are the questions concerning the origin and governance of the universe, the nature of God, the person of Christ, or the destiny of the human soul, these matters are not, after all, of prime practical importance. One can be as good a Christian without so much as giving them a thought; they have no actual bearing upon the question, What is the best way to live? What is more, too much emphasis

upon them tends to crowd out the main thing, which is to live aright. Convictions we must, indeed, have; light, intelligence, insight, as well as inspiration. But the important convictions are convictions about what we ought to *do*. We can safely let the universe run itself and concern ourselves with running properly our own little lives. So when we speak of the educational function of the Church we should have in mind primarily her work in *spreading insight into the true values in human life*.

The danger, however, lies not merely in diverting interest from moral-spiritual valuations to historical-cosmological theories, but in teaching these theories as if they were unquestionable verities. The old notion that we have a sure, revealed deposit of truth, of which the Church is the custodian, must be definitely abandoned. Doctrines are merely some one's personal opinions, handed down to us, and accepted by the majority in a church. They are only theories, conjectures, attempts to express and explain what has largely lain beyond men's comprehension. The teaching of theology should, therefore, be not propaganda, not indoctrination, but study, discussion, a tentative, humble, seeking after truth.

Here we touch upon what is perhaps the Church's greatest sin — the sin of encouraging the closed mind instead of urging open-mindedness and the critical spirit. Men have been asked to believe thus and so simply because such was the inherited teaching of the Church. This is putting shackles on the mind. In so far as the Church has encouraged people to give their assent, without searching inquiry, to doctrines whose truth is sincerely questioned by any considerable number of intelligent men, she has done a grave disservice to our democracy. But not only

has she taught questionable opinions as certain, she has attempted to inoculate her members with such an assurance with regard to them that they shall be immune to opposing arguments. By emotional influences she has stifled the murmurings of the intellect. The result is that the whole course of modern thought has been confused, and few, if any, modern philosophers have attained to the intellectual clarity of the Greeks. The fact that a man belongs to a church is widely taken to show that he has an uncritical mind.

To "teach the truth" is, in short, too presumptuous a phrase. The Church must get a humbler conception of her mission, and be content to try, by open discussion and scholarly study, to lead men gradually nearer and nearer to the truth. With this revision of her claims, the educational function of the Church may be said to be valuable and important.

There remains to be emphasized what we may call the Social Function of the Church. Christianity is, above everything else, the religion of service. This concern for one's own soul, that has figured so much in ecclesiastical discussion, is, after all, but a sublimated form of self-seeking. The true Christian is concerned not so much with saving himself as with saving the world. It is far more Christian an activity to be opposing political graft or the inhumane treatment of employees, to be standing hard against the spirit of greed in business, the spirit of violence and lawlessness, or the wanton luxury of the rich, to be seeking to root out wrongs and improve social relationships, than to be repeating the Apostles' Creed or singing hymns.

The social work of the Church must not, of course, displace its inspirational and educational work. It

must not degenerate into a mere giving of good times to people. But certainly the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself demands that the Church be a center for every sort of needed service. Should it not, indeed, be the greatest of all forces making for that regenerated social order wherein God's will is to be fully expressed, which it has steadily looked forward to under the name of the Kingdom of God on earth?

To sum up, then, the Church should be a great educational institution, giving the great mass of common people insight, as it can find it, into the meaning and mystery of life, and a clear apprehension of their real needs and duties. It should patiently, week by week, train its members in the performance of these duties. It should be a center for friendship and human sympathy, a means of ministry to the community, a standing rebuke to the sins of the world, and a lever for attack upon all forms of sin and wrong.

The critics of the Church say that these tasks are not being adequately performed; that the Church is hugging to itself an antiquated mass of superstition, is lost in the performance of mere rites and ceremonies, is not making a great, sustained effort to realize the Christian ideal either in the more personal or in the more widely social relationships of life. But certainly the emphasis has shifted in recent years. Religions tend to pass through three stages — from an emphasis upon cult to an emphasis upon belief, and thence, finally, to an emphasis upon conduct. So at least it is with our Church. Her traditional rites and ceremonies have their value as symbols, clothing the simple aspirations and duties of the Christian life with solemnity, and giving them historical background. Her creeds are stepping-stones on the long

road to truth. But the criterion of her usefulness is more and more coming to be recognized as the degree in which she permeates with Christian idealism the personal and social life of the world about her.

To be sure, we might approve this aim, but think other means adequate, and perhaps better, for its attainment. There are many roads outside the Church that lead toward this same goal. A man may cultivate his religious life by reading inspirational books, by solitary prayer and meditation, by well-chosen friendships, or by other *ad hoc* organizations. These methods offer the great advantage that the man can choose what best helps him, instead of being obliged to listen to pulpit-utterances that perhaps bore and perhaps annoy him; he can pick his own time for spiritual converse, instead of following the clock.

But the first question to ask is, *Will he really do these things?* Here and there a man, or a woman, will. Such a one can perhaps get on well enough without the Church. But few there are who, in the rush of affairs, in the midst of the seductive richness of modern life, will attend, of their own volition, regularly and at sufficient length to the needs of the spirit. How many people who do not go to church make a practice of reading religious books, or of daily prayer? Cultivating spirituality takes time; and unless regular, definite hours are reserved for it, the chances are almost overwhelming that presently no time at all will be given. Religion easily becomes choked and crowded out of the heart, like Darwin's love of poetry. That preacher had a true insight, though an uncertain command of metaphor, who prayed, "If there is a spark of religion in any half-believing heart, water it, O Lord, water it."

Moreover, there are few people who can find the springs of spirituality when by themselves. For most men there is inspiration in numbers; they need to feel themselves part of a great movement. The crowd-impulse is a tremendous dynamic, as we see in the case of patriotism, or, in an evil way, in the case of lynchings; it should be utilized to the full for religion. Even if a man is unconscious of this social influence bearing upon him, it is there; and if the churches should disappear, the most solitary saint would feel the loss.

Then, quite apart from the abstract argument, there is the fact that the Church actually has a tremendous hold upon masses of people. Far the larger part of the aspiration and upward-pushing forces of the western world for the last nineteen hundred years have been enrolled under her banner. This historic continuity, this roll-call of heroes and martyrs, gives background and atmosphere to our spiritual life—"an hereditary foundation of revered memories, ideas, habits, sentiments, associations, deep-rooted in the heart." Just as an artist turns to the Old Masters for inspiration, we need to turn to the great masters of the spiritual life. And, obviously, for effective social ministry, there must be organization.

For many of those who go gladly to church it is, indeed, more for the social pleasure than for any serious purpose. One meets there one's friends, there are warm hand-clasps, there is music, and rest; it is a welcome break in the week's routine. But even for those who go in this spirit there is a chance that they will catch some higher spirit from those who come there to seek and express it. Most people who have discovered in themselves spiritual aspirations have

caught them at some church-service somewhere. And for those who have found springs elsewhere, there are few but can profit also from the fellowship of the Church. The Church is the great force that brings men together in common aspiration and common service. There at least they need not be shamefaced to talk of spiritual things; there they can feel that others are caring for them too and endeavoring to put them into practice. A man should come out of her hallowed precincts with his own resolves redoubled and his weakness put to shame from the sight of the earnestness and consecration of others.

There are many, probably, who would never have dreamed of the possibility of a better life had the Church not summoned them to it with her patient insistence; there are surely many more who would become too distracted by the pressure of practical affairs, or by the lure of the immediate and the pleasurable, to realize outwardly their private dreams, were it not for her continual reminders. There are hidden reservoirs of power, latent aspirations and possibilities, in most of us that are never discovered or drawn upon; no man but is a potential hero if you can touch the right spring in his nature; and even the criminal would have done some splendid service if his interest had been early turned in the right direction and his energies rightly guided.

Men are suggestible creatures; they are the prey of a thousand influences that stream from the people they meet, the newspapers they read, the words they hear. The Church at its best is a powerful source of suggestion drawing them toward the highest things. The words of the preacher, who has given his life to the study of the human heart and its needs, bringing to his hearers well-worn ideas, perhaps, but

put in new ways and applied to current problems, the joining in prayer and song—the whole atmosphere of the Church is a strong counterweight to the many downward-dragging influences of their daily environment.

If this is so, is there not strong reason in it for believing that when a man thinks he does not need the influence of some church, that man is wrapped in the cloak of his own conceit? Honest he may be, of the strictest integrity, and actuated by the most unselfish motives; but is it not likely that there are depths in his nature that he has never sounded, secret faults that he does not know? If he can walk so well unaided, how much more could he not attain when moved by the faith and enthusiasm of others! This is not to say that he could find the help he needs in any actual church within his reach. But it is to say that *a* church, *some* church, to do what we have indicated, is a necessary and important part of the social structure. It is conceivable that the Christian Church should disappear; but if so, something will arise to take its place. Whatever we may call it, there will always be a need of some organization to do for men what the Christian Church, blunderingly and more or less blindly, but still often with great effectiveness, has done.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL

THE essential point that the Church must never forget is that Christianity "saves" men not just by being accepted, or believed, but by being *lived*. Acceptance, faith — these are but preliminary steps, which may remain abortive. The task of the Church may well begin by inducing men to acquiesce in the truth of Christianity, enroll themselves as members of her organization, and partake of her sacraments. But this is merely her opportunity, and theirs. The real task of the Church is to train her members to *be* Christian, in their everyday conduct, and to go forth and Christianize the world.

Thus, before we examine the methods by which the Church can Christianize her members, and the world, we must understand clearly what it is to be a Christian. What is this Way of life that "saves" men — that, as we put it, gives life meaning, worth, scope for latent energies, the highest usefulness, freedom, and power? To attempt a restatement of the essence of Christianity within the compass of a few pages may seem a needless repetition of familiar truths. But after all, the heart of the matter is just here; the fundamental source of the failure of the churches — in so far as they have failed — lies in their distorted and inadequate conception of the Gospel that they exist to preach.

Christianity is too big a thing for any man, or for

any sect, to define satisfactorily in phrase or creed. It is a vast tidal force, a sweeping flame of regeneration, a great movement in the spiritual history of man. Focusing about the personality and teaching of Jesus, it drew into its synthesis all that was best in the religious life of Jewish and Gentile world, and became the community of men of good will, the crystallization of their faith in man's future, the army of those who were willing to work and pray for that future in a world of selfishness, sensuality, discord and despair. The churches have done it an ill service by penning it up in their strait-laced creeds; it is more than the creeds — and less. It is a living thing, to be found in the hearts of the faithful; it has outgrown a thousand formulations and will outgrow a thousand more. The fundamental trouble with the church-creeds is that, in perpetuating this or that man's conception of historic facts and cosmic relationships, they fail to express what the religion essentially *is*. It is, essentially, a new *intent* in men's hearts, a new attitude toward life, a new direction given to the will.

The fact is that (as the doctrine of Original Sin rather one-sidedly affirms) the human animal is, by instinct, a pretty selfish and sensual creature; if unguided and uninspired by some outer influence his life would be bickering, brutish, and brief. Moralizing influences of all sorts have, of course, impinged upon him since long before the dawn of recorded history. But of all these regenerative forces, the movement known as Christianity has been most efficacious. Into a world which is never free from the necessity of struggling with the lure of the senses, with the inertia of the will, with demoralization and despair, a world which was then at one of its lowest ebbs of

corruption and vice, the gospel of Christ came with a light of surpassing wisdom and beauty. A great wave of spiritual fervor swept over the western world. Whether or not this turn of the tide was an inevitable reaction, and, if so, what forms it might have assumed under a different set of historic circumstances, need not concern us. Suffice it to say that the greater part of the moral idealism of Europe since that day, and of all the lands where European influence has become dominant, has enrolled itself under the banner of the prophet of Nazareth.

The outstanding features of this spiritual movement, as one looks to its origin and to its persistence during nineteen centuries of varying world-view, are its faith, its militancy, and its assertion of human brotherhood. It is an optimistic religion, a crusading religion, a religion of universal love. It is not easy to keep these motives from interfering with one another: the faith readily becomes complacency, and interferes with the militancy; the militancy easily becomes harsh, and interferes with the charity; the *caritas* naturally leads to heartache and anxiety, and interferes with the faith. Most individual Christians have gone astray in one or more of these ways; and whole epochs of the Church have forgotten or under-emphasized one of these essential aspects of the religion. But the greatness of Christianity lay precisely in its synthesis; and it is not too much to say that the cardinal faults of the Church to-day result from its neglect of one or the other of these essential Christian virtues.

Faith is something that we are afraid of, and properly enough afraid of in these latter days. It has so often meant the effort of believing what is irrational, unevidenced, or obviously untrue. Because

of faith, the spread of a sane and scientific world-view is still seriously blocked. But what we need is, after all, not less faith, but a better founded faith. There are some things which it is hard to believe psychologically, though it is not hard rationally — as when the child learning to swim is told that the water will buoy him up if he lies still, or moves his arms gently. That is the proper province for faith — to keep us believing ardently, not in “what we know ain’t true,” but in what we know *can be made true*, if we will. As in William James’ famous parable of the Alpine climber who needed faith to enable him to jump the chasm which confronted him, so we need faith as we face the larger task of redeeming our individual lives and the social order which so cramps and brutalizes men and women all about us.

Faith we must have, not only for the joy of it, but for its dynamic; faith in the coming, in spite of appearances, which are so often disheartening, of the Kingdom of God. The briefest survey of the Synoptic Gospels, and of Paul’s letters, shows them athrob with this faith. The millennialism of these source-documents of Christianity is somewhat local and naïve, to be sure; it has needed translation into terms which generations of men could accept. But it was a vast pity that the Church came so quickly to put its millennial order into another and supernatural world, instead of looking for it here and soon, on earth. The phrase *Kingdom of Heaven* readily lent itself to this interpretation. But that phrase was simply a reverent circumlocution for *Kingdom of God* — the word *God* being avoided by the pious, as too sacred to utter. And that Kingdom meant, for the writers of the early New Testament documents, a New Age, expected presently here on earth, when

men should live in accordance with the divine laws, and peace, justice, and prosperity should be universal. Modern translators render the phrase *Reign of God* — which properly connotes its temporal, rather than spatial meaning. It was a noble vision. It embodied a profound discontent with the sort of social order which the world had hitherto accepted as necessary, a lifting of the horizon, a farther vista, a new goal for effort and hope. No one who has ever caught this vision can be content with the world as it is; no one who has ever come into contact with the personality of Christ can help catching something of his profound faith in the coming of this Better World.

But this faith is not a merely passive faith, enabling men to bear the ills of life with serenity, it is a militant faith, bidding them dare to strive to conquer those ills. The Stoics and the Epicureans both retreated from an evil world. But Jesus summoned men not to flee from evil but to overcome it. He came to bring not peace with the powers of darkness, but a sword. The Church, to be sure, here again has often forgotten its mission; men who thought themselves Christian have turned their backs on the world and been content with a negative ideal of sinlessness. But such is not the teaching of Jesus, or of the Church in its best days. Rather, that teaching demands not only war to the death with the selfish and the carnal in our own hearts, but war to the death with regnant evil in the world.

Buddhism preached salvation, safety, escape from life, oblivion, Nirvana. Not such is our religion. The Christian emphasis upon love, *caritas*, must not make us suppose that Jesus was a mollicoddle, or his religion one for the coward or the shirk. No, the religion of Christ offers salvation not through oblivion,

but through service. And service means warfare; not warfare against other *men* — that was the error of the crusaders — but warfare against wrong ideals, evil habits, unjust and cruel practices and demands. Jesus was a young man. Christianity is not a religion to turn to for consolation when, in middle age, the time has come to “settle down.” It is a religion for youth, and for the eternally young; a religion that calls upon every bit of our energy and courage, that bids us not save our lives but lose them. Christianity is an adventure, a *cause*; it ought to enlist all the boldest and bravest spirits; it will some day remake the world.

But again, this militant religion condemns and combats only the evil in men; at the same time it sees the spark of good in all, it welcomes all as brothers, it preaches the doctrine of universal love. “By this shall men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” To love God and man, Jesus is reported to have said, is sufficient to “inherit eternal life.” This means that we must care so much for others that we give of our effort to help them. Christian love is not sentimentality, it is service. It implies not merely tolerance but genuine understanding and fellowship with those whose manners and morals are different from our own, a sense of brotherhood that should include, for us, negroes and Chinese, “inferior races,” “lower classes,” the dirty, the ignorant, the stupid, the childish, and all the people with whom we do not instinctively choose to associate. It implies patience and forgiveness, unflinching tenderness and good humor toward those who irritate us or ill-use us. It implies loving your enemies, loving the unlovable. It implies giving up all censoriousness, all resentfulness at injuries, all unpleasant

gossip, all impatient and hot-tempered words and thoughts. It implies kindness and cheerfulness, which Stevenson once declared "come before all morality." They do. They are religion. They are Christianity.

This then is the way in which Christianity saves us: it frees our minds from selfish and petty interests, it gives us something big and worth while for which to live. The Christian life is the dedicated life. Christianity has sometimes been perverted into mere contemplative worship and submission; the passive virtues — gentleness, purity, meekness, abstinence, and the rest — have been overemphasized. That was not Christ's Christianity. His life was a passion for helpfulness, his call was a challenge to men to repent — to do works worthy of repentance. The doctrine of the Cross, which later teaching made the heart of Christianity, was not a mere negative renunciation, but a vigorous choosing, yes, and a rejoicing in, the life of self-sacrificing service.

This is Christianity; it is the real thing. There is much else that has been called Christianity, but this is what is cardinal, and what is common to all forms of the religion — the imperishable flame within the creeds. We do not easily realize how new and revolutionary this teaching was to the Græco-Roman world. It was, indeed, only the logical consummation of the Jewish religion. But the Jewish religion had been, except for a few prophetic visions, quite exclusively nationalistic; it remained for Christianity to preach the Brotherhood of all men. The Brotherhood of Man — the doctrine of love and faith — it sounds ridiculously simple. But the simplest things are the hardest and the most worth while. The essence of Christianity can be understood by a child — as Jesus

said; but to practise it faithfully requires the patience and courage of a saint.

It is worth emphasizing, moreover, that Christianity is not only a way to live, but the way that Christ lived. It gives us not only a precept but an example. Hence it is natural, and of great importance, that we should feel a personal loyalty to our Leader. He was a great religious genius, who saw deep into the true values of life. He expressed his insight in incomparable sayings, which have not become obsolete with the passage of time. He was a moving example of his own teaching, in his life and in his tragic martyr-death. His name has become a symbol, and in that name millions have been saved. Around the impulse that he gave has gathered this great historic movement that has done more than anything else for the spiritual life of the world. Saviour he has been widely called. But since that word so easily implies passivity on the part of the individual, and miraculous power on the part of Christ, it is wiser, perhaps, to use the simpler, but equally reverent term, Leader. He led the way; it is for us to follow in his steps.

Our reverence for his personality and his insight must not blind us, however, to the fact that there are some slight aspects of his teaching which we must discard. He was a child of his times, as every one is; and elements that are local and accidental mingle in his teaching with what is essential and distinctively Christian. No one can believe to-day quite as Jesus did; it is only by misunderstanding his words and misreading history that any one can suppose that he does. Jesus evidently — if the recorded sayings are at all trustworthy — lived, as did his pious predecessors, contemporaries, and followers, in the expectation of an imminent and catastrophic coming of the

Kingdom of God, to be inaugurated by a dramatic Judgment Day. The bodies of the dead were to rise from the grave and be judged, the Messiah was to appear on the clouds of Heaven to separate the saved from the lost. This picture of coming events, which had become more or less stereotyped in the apocalyptic thought of the times, is found in all of the Synoptic Gospels, in Paul's letters, and in a large part of the remaining early-Christian literature. Jesus could hardly have been brought up on the Hebrew scriptures, as they were then interpreted, without sharing passionately this hope. The fact—which seems well evidenced—that he expected to play himself the leading rôle in this startling series of events is hardly surprising, in view of his great genius and personal power. But we know little of his life and thought, save the preaching of his Way of Salvation; and what influences or what visions led him to the belief in his own coming Messiahship it is impossible now to say.

This whole dramatic picture of the imminent inauguration of the New Era was, of course, an illusion. But the illusion was no greater than those under which most great teachers have labored. The socialist movement, for example, has had its—in some respects similar—yearning toward a juster and humaner social order obscured by the illusion that a Day was coming—not unlike the *Dies irae* of early Christianity—when the oppressed proletariat everywhere would rise in their might and overthrow their Capitalist oppressors, and inaugurate thereafter a socialistic Kingdom of God on earth. Most of us are convinced that the millennium can come in no such cataclysmic style, but is to be gradually approached by the patient labor and sacrifice of many genera-

tions. But the over-sanguine expectations of Christ and the early Christians must not dim for us the splendor and inherent rightness of their vision and of the gospel of Love and Faith which they saw clearly to be the means to its realization.

It is surprising how little Jesus' teaching was prejudiced by the prescientific ideas of his times and the provincialities of his countrymen. Its clarity and sanity and "sweet reasonableness" are very striking, by the side, for example, of Paul's labored and sometimes sophistical arguments, or by the side of any other contemporary teaching. What though Jesus supposed mental and nervous disease to be demonic possession, what though he shared the errors of his countrymen with regard to the authorship of Old Testament writings, what though he knew little or no science, politics, art! The heart of his teaching is absolutely and immortally true, and what, above everything else, the world needs for its salvation.

The traditional conception of Christ is drawn partly from the ideas of the apostolic and early post-apostolic Christians, as expressed in the New Testament, and partly from later ideas read back into those narratives. Christ quickly became for his followers an ideal being — as is shown by the fact that his own name, Jesus, was displaced by the title Christ, Messiah, the Anointed One,—his significance as revealer of God, saviour of men, being of greater importance than his human personality. It is unfortunate that this theological conception of Jesus has clouded our understanding of the events of his life — that the stories which the credulous and miracle-loving evangelists repeated, and embroidered, should be taught as literal fact in the twentieth century, while those

sayings, with all the marks of genuineness, which are hard to reconcile with the picture thus outlined, are relegated to the background as "dark sayings." It is unfortunate that most Christians should have so unreal and naïve a conception of the very virile, red-blooded, real man who has become their hero. But after all, it is more important that men should have a concrete and ideal hero, than that they should have a correct historical comprehension of his life and personality. And though the meek, mystical, and wonder-working ecclesiastical Christ compares very unfavorably, to the unprejudiced eye, with the vigorous, passionate, intensely loving, intensely suffering, intensely human Jesus that modern historical scholarship has recovered for us, still we must acknowledge that generations have drawn comfort and inspiration from the Church's Christ, and be content.

The "orthodox," of course, will not agree to the picture of Christ thus suggested, or to the conception of the Christian Gospel above unfolded. Christianity to them means essentially a theology — that cosmological-historical world-view of creation, fall, redemption by vicarious atonement, and impending judgment which was worked out by thinkers steeped in the Hebraic traditions and the later Greek supernaturalistic philosophy of the early Christian centuries. Now the fact that the dogmas then conceived and since become traditional were not a part of Jesus' own teaching need not lead to their rejection. Christianity, to be a living religion, must be a growing religion, and incorporate into itself the best thought of every age. But what the "orthodox" fail to realize is that what was convincing reasoning for the early centuries is nonsense to the twentieth.

And, moreover, that all this speculation was never anything but external wrapping, and not the heart of Christianity.

✓ It is high time, then, that the Church should free the kernel from the husks in its traditions, should emphasize not the errors but the truths of Christianity. Our religion is cheaply rated when it is held to be a set of dogmas, largely discredited by modern knowledge — instead of being seen as a flame of sacrificing love that purifies the will of selfishness and lethargy and gives life new meaning and power. If the traditionalists insist on giving the name Christianity to their tottering theology, the real Christianity may come to be called by another name. But it will be the reality, and the other but a decaying husk.

Is it not, after all, as Matthew Arnold said, "A matter where practice is everything and theory nothing"? Certainly Christ had no interest either in theology or in ecclesiasticism. His whole concern was to heal, to inspire, to teach men to live the God-like life — which is now called, after him, the Christ-like life — to arouse in them a faith in the coming of the Better World. Who is the Christian, then? Not merely he who believes in the "God in Three Persons" of modern orthodoxy, in the Atonement, in Heaven and Hell,— not he at all, unless he believes in the spirit of Christ, the spirit of love and forgiveness, of charity, purity, self-surrender, and undying faith; if he has that spirit, which everywhere is known as the Christian spirit, his belief on these theological matters is immaterial. The Christian is he who seeks to live the life that Christ lived and taught, who takes his yoke upon him and learns of him, and finds that his yoke is easy and his burden light.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHRISTIANIZING CHURCH-MEMBERS

CAN the Church ever hope to succeed in making any great proportion of its members really Christian in character? If so, how shall it set to work on this great undertaking? In all times it has succeeded with a few of its members. Are these true Christians of different clay from the rest of us? No, at least not in great measure; spirituality is not inherited but acquired. There is no inherent reason why the great mass of our people should not be guided into this more beautiful, more useful, and happier life which Christ proposed to men. It is, then, of great importance to consider the means available to this end.

At the outset we must recognize that the methods suitable to an older generation are no longer available for us. Until we realize this, and work out new methods for the new age, we are in danger of getting fewer rather than more men and women of marked spirituality. The fact is, in a word, that the older type of piety was produced chiefly by daily hours of poring over the Bible, and prayerful offering of allegiance to its teachings. But, for good or ill, the modern world is losing the naïve conception of the Bible, as an oracle, a source of ultimate authority, which led to that method of religious education. The younger generation reads the Bible as a set of interesting and often inspiring historical documents;

but the uniqueness of the Bible is gone. It can no longer have the same power of "suggestion" that it had over the minds of an earlier generation.

There are gains that go with this loss. The older, exclusively Bible-bred piety tended, naturally, to narrowness; the virtues not preached in the Bible were not fostered. There was little breadth of sympathy with alien ideals, little of the spirit that keeps ever seeking for new ideas, little real open-mindedness, little passion for truth. All the moral problems were supposed to be solved. The attitude of credulity, acceptance, was placed above that of a healthy criticism; free thought was frowned upon as dangerous. Because of this, the Church has been the ultra-conservative force in the community and seldom assumed leadership in the solving of the new problems of each generation.

Altogether, it is no wonder that the world has looked rather askance at Christian piety. It has seemed too dogmatic, too blind, too emotionalistic, too backward-looking, too content with the personal virtues. We must develop a broader, more practical, redder-blooded piety, a piety with a sense of humor and a love of all innocent pleasures, an outward and forward looking piety, terribly intent on making over our world, and willing to have its worth measured by its observable value to the community. For this — perhaps less serene and peaceful, but really higher, because more useful — piety, we need more than the Bible. After all, it is not with the problems of Moses, or of Paul, that we are concerned, but with the problems of today. And the practically exclusive use of the Bible keeps the Church too much at arm's length from actual life. The younger generation feels this unreality, this ecclesiastical remoteness, and

is restive under it. Their real interests and problems lie outside.

Another method approved by our elders was the revivalistic method, the method of abrupt conversion accompanied by intense emotional stress and followed by a sense of attainment and inward content. Such methods have fallen under suspicion, owing to the observation that people thus "converted" so often turn out to be little, if at all, different from what they were before. There have, indeed, been cases where such an emotional crisis has marked the turning-point in a life; and perhaps periodic waves of emotionalism are good for the average soul, cleansing it from the dust of petty cares and giving it a new impetus toward its eternal goal. But the reliance upon this once-and-for-all method of Christianizing people is very dangerous. Very often nothing really comes of it; it is a mere emotional debauch, a passing exaltation of spirit, followed by a slow sag into the old worldliness or sensuality.

The point that should never be forgotten is that the kindling of the emotions is only a means. If properly used, it may be a valuable means. But it is of no use at all unless it eventuates in an actually altered and purified life. As Dr. H. F. Cope puts it, in his admirable volume on *Religious Education in the Church*, "If emotional experiences are to have value, the stimulus must stimulate to something; it must be a beginning and not a terminus."

More than this, if nothing practical comes of the experience, it has been worse than useless, it has been harmful, by making the subject less responsive to future emotional stimuli. To an ardent soul it is a great joy to experience one of these tidal waves of the spirit, or even to sit under an eloquent preacher and

feel one's emotional nature stirred, to laughter or to tears. But for the most part it is mere dissipation, no better and no worse than the emotional exaltation one may experience at a play, a movie, a concert, or in reading a powerful work of fiction. These emotions form a little world of their own within the mind, offering a grateful release from the cares and worries and blunders of the week. But it is a dangerous release, unless out of the heightened mood there emerges a new grip upon impulse, a new bent to the will.

In short, the revivalistic method is altogether too uncertain. And even when it has succeeded, it has been because of an antecedent period of conscious or sub-conscious preparation. In general, it is true that to alter human character requires long effort and perseverance; it is "dogged as does it." That is why the daily poring over the Bible was so effective, for those who could look upon it as the divine oracle and rule of life.

Is the problem hopeless? Is there no possible way to produce a piety of a practical sort among great numbers of men and women? No one can think so who has seen what skilful education can do with even the most unpromising material. No, the trouble is that the Church has not clearly enough realized the exact nature of its problem. Its problem is to form Christian character; and the process of character-formation is, above all else, a process of training the *will*. It is easy enough to have ideals; but to get them incorporated into conduct is the point. This requires the use of powerful and unremitting forces. It profits us nothing that we give assent to spiritual truths, that we wish ourselves pure and kind and self-controlled, it is not enough that we will in our best

hours to follow the highest. The tides of longing to live nobly will evaporate, the impulse of the moment will have its way. Only the trained will can be depended on to keep true; and so the crux of the problem of the Church is the problem of directing and strengthening the will.

Happily, we have to-day an excellent illustration of success in this undertaking. I venture to say that the best results in the building of Christian character that are being attained to-day are being attained by the organization of Boy Scouts; and in scarcely lesser degree by the Girl Scouts and Camp Fire Girls. In proportion to the number of boys and girls they are reaching, they are doing far more for the youth of the country than the church-services and church-schools are doing. And this is because they have understood the psychology of youth — I would even say, the psychology of the human being — better than the churches have understood it. Of course they succeed in very varying degree in different cases, according to the human material they have to deal with, and the adequacy of the scout-master or guardian to his or her task as guide and adviser. But on the whole they are succeeding well enough to make this the most promising venture in the moral training of youth that has ever been devised.

What is the secret of their success? First and foremost, they really *interest* the average boy and girl — which is more than we can honestly say of church and Sunday-school. We may as well make up our minds to this: you cannot save unless you can interest. And the average boy, to be quite frank, is bored — or irked — in church or Sunday-school. He has to be pushed to attend, he gets little or nothing out of it. It is what his parents want him to be in-

terested in, not what he *is* interested in. He has no share in its program, no opportunity to express *himself* in it. Jewish history (or pseudo-history), supposed acts of Christian apostles, exhortations of Christian missionaries to their infant congregations — all this is not only remote, but seldom gives him a vision of the sort of hero he really admires. This is partly due to the false atmosphere of goody-goody which is created by tradition about these really red-blooded men. But, however that may be, these are not his natural heroes, and it is very difficult to make him give more than a languid attention to them.

On the other hand, the name "scout," with all the glamour of danger and endurance and skill that it suggests, the wearing of a khaki uniform, the romance of outdoors unfolded to him, the opportunities for developing skill in all sorts of alluring and useful ways — all this, and much more in the very fascinating program of scouting, not only rouses and keeps the boy's interest, but keeps it in general at a pretty high pitch.

To say that the boy is interested does not go far enough; the maintaining of the scout code *becomes his own interest*. Whereas at church, or even at young people's devotional meetings, the boy commonly is in the attitude of feeling that he *ought* to believe and desire this and that, in the scout code he has what represents his own actual highest ideals. The great international scout movement is *his* movement, he is part of it, and is proud of it. Instead of being exhorted, preached at, repressed, his own longing to be a good scout is enough. "A scout is trustworthy; a scout is loyal; a scout is helpful; a scout is clean; a scout is cheerful; a scout is reverent." The principle of "suggestion" is used in

the adroitest way in this scout law, which is worth a thousand prohibitions. Boys are just as eager to be autonomous as grown-ups; let them have a code that is their *own* code, and they will stick to it through rain and shine. They are far more sensitive to the approval and blame of their equals than to that of their elders. When they attain to the privilege of being a scout, and repeat the Scout Oath: "On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country, and to obey the scout law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight," they are not merely hearing what their elders want them to do, they are saying what they themselves want to do, and will to do.

More than this: the scout not only develops the power of self-compulsion (which is the essence of conscience) by his personal espousal of the scout code, but his scouting activities require him to put this code into constant practice. He learns not by being taught, but by doing — which is the best way to learn many things, and the only way to learn character. It is ideals actually made use of that count. Sunday-school teaching and church exhortation rarely get focused upon any positive thing the boy is about to do; it is tucked away with his stiff dress-up clothes and the other uncomfortable memories of Sunday, when the boy starts out on his real life on Monday morning. If he is a scout, however, he is conscious of being a scout on Monday morning; he must begin to look for the opportunity to do his daily "good turn," he has the honor of his troop at stake, he has all sorts of useful and difficult achievements to work toward in his spare moments. Instead of a vague feeling that he must be "good," "keep out of mis-

chief," refrain from this or that, his mind is fixed upon a positive program toward which natural instincts lead him, and which is gradually making him self-reliant, resourceful, sturdy, and full of a clean, normal zest in life. Boys are not naturally bad, they are resourceless, they need things to do. Wrong doing is energy gone astray. Salvation lies in their having wholesome activities — and so far as possible they should be outdoor activities — so shot through with moral values that out of the very joy of doing will crystallize social ideals and personal power.

In the nature of the case, church-services and Sunday-schools, with their hour or two a week, can accomplish little. *Character-building takes time.* Just as the saints of an earlier day attained their type of spirituality through daily poring over the Bible and self-examination and prayer, so the men of strong and sweet character that we need to-day can only be produced by some force working within them every day in the week. Scouting is such a seven-day-in-the-week affair. The scout is on his honor every hour of every day.

Even the public school takes less than a quarter of the boy's waking time during the year, and leaves his play-hours — the most valuable and dangerous part of his day — untouched. It rarely gets a deep hold on the boy's allegiance. And although much can be, and ought to be, done toward character-building in the schools, the school-atmosphere, like the church-atmosphere, remains for most boys an alien atmosphere, so that the ideas there set before him and the habits there required often do not transfer to the hours of his own free life and become his very own.

It may be objected that scouting is all very well, but is not religious education. Well, neither is

Bible study, or church-attendance, in itself. These are all but means to an end—the building of Christian character; the question is, which is, for boys and girls, the most effective means? I have myself no doubt as to the answer. But in any case, it is clear that the scouting program makes its members manly, alert, honorable, and courteous, with bodies trained to serve their wills, and wills trained to ideals of service. And since there is no conflict, but rather the opportunity for heartiest coöperation, between church, Sunday-school, and scout-troop, there is no excuse for failure on the part of the churches everywhere to use the scouting-program.

As it is, eighty per cent of the troops are connected with churches, and a majority of scout-masters are ministers or Sunday-school workers. But as yet a scant ten per cent of our churches are using the movement, and less than half a million boys, out of eight or ten millions, are enrolled. The scout movement is growing rapidly, however, as is that of the Camp Fire Girls, whose program, with its fascinating symbolism and poetry, is equally efficacious in character-building. Those movements should be linked so closely to the churches that they will form a natural doorway to Church-membership. The boys and girls should be made to feel, as they grow older, that the Church is the great organization that seeks to realize in the world the ideals which they have sought, in their way, too, to realize, and so is their natural home.

Now it will always be with youth that most can be done. But we older people are still in some degree plastic, and in need of every possible help in the strengthening, and repairing, and further building of our Christian character. The success with younger people of the movement of which I have been speak-

ing, should be full of suggestion for us. For after all, the psychology of the adult is much the same as that of youth.

What we need is, perhaps not less exhortation, but certainly more ways of expressing for ourselves our own ideals; we need participation in activities that will crystallize our ideals into actual habits. Church-membership must be less a passive acquiescence, and more a personal espousal, in which we pledge ourselves to definite, concrete standards of conduct, and to tangible achievement, as the scouts do, in the form of effort for service. No amount of listening to preaching — much less the hour or two a week of the church-services — can take the place of this personal interest and activity. The church-service is to many people a pleasant emotional exhilaration (of the only sort respectable, or available, on Sunday), the producer of a Sunday mood, completely forgotten by Monday morning's breakfast, and never focused upon the doings of the week.

It may be objected that the Church is not to be blamed if Christians do not practise their Christianity. But it is not a question of blame that I am concerned with, it is the question how the Church can succeed in doing her job. *Her job is to make people live Christianly*, not to provide Sunday entertainment. In so far as Christians do not practise their Christianity, the Church has not yet succeeded in doing her job. It is too easily assumed that there must be some vital effect from a service of hymns, Bible-readings, exhortation. But experience shows that very often there is no observable effect whatsoever. Going to church is, for many people, like going to the movies — except that going to church gives a comfortable illusion of having done one's duty; one is

taken out of oneself and mildly exhilarated; but one turns back again to one's week-day clothes, one's week-day selfishness and pettiness and actual working purposes.

Is it not clear, then, that the Church should, in all humility, learn a lesson from the Scout and Camp Fire movements, should not only utilize these programs for its youth, but should adopt the underlying psychology of these movements for its adult membership? Great numbers of these boys and girls are practising their simple but vital code more loyally than all but a few Christians are practising their Christianity. In a way, the Church may take credit for this new impulse among our youth, for its ideals are, after all, the old Christian ideals, handed down by the Church, and always held up by her, if only partially lived up to. But our boys and girls are shaming us. Shall we let them grow up into an atmosphere of "real life" that is selfish, hard, materialistic, and pleasure-loving? Or shall we train the great masses of our older, church-going population to practise these ideals with the same genuineness of enthusiasm? If this could be done, we should breathe free when we think of the future of our democracy.

M. Payot declares that nine tenths of our woes are due to our weakness of will. This is, no doubt, an exaggeration. Many even of our self-caused troubles come from ignorance. Our schools and colleges, and our press, exist to correct that ignorance, and to help us grope our way toward the solution of our yet unsolved problems. But the A B C's of life were solved long ago. Our Christian code is not to be just believed in, "accepted" as our ideal, and given lip-reverence; it is to be made our very own, hammered into us until we realize every hour of every day that

“a Christian is trustworthy; a Christian is loyal; a Christian is helpful; a Christian is clean; a Christian is cheerful; . . . a Christian is reverent”; until the will to practise these virtues is our own will, and strong enough to overcome the daily temptations that make these simple virtues so difficult.

A world of people who practised these virtues — what an altered world it would be! It would be the Kingdom of God on earth. It is precisely to bring in the day of that Kingdom that the Church exists. This is the Church's job; and until it succeeds in actually getting that job done, it cannot rest content.

CHAPTER FIVE

CHRISTIANIZING THE COMMUNITY

It may be asked, If you "save" individuals, what remains to be done? Is not a community of Christianized individuals a Christianized community? The answer is threefold.

In the first place, the Church cannot hope to reach and Christianize all the members of a community. Those whom she can spiritualize must go out and fight against the wrongs committed by the selfish and the sensual, must hold out their hands to those who are the victims of a ruthless commercialism and a social order as yet but little permeated by the spirit of Christ.

In the second place, it is precisely in the doing of this that a man becomes Christian. Being converted, going to church, keeping pure, these are preliminary steps; Christianity itself is service. The process of saving the individual is, ultimately, the process of making him live for the community. That is his salvation. Righteousness is essentially a social activity; and no one is wholly a Christian until he is doing his duty by his fellows in every social relationship.

In the third place, it is not easy, sometimes not possible, for the individual to be thoroughly Christian except as the spirit of Christianity has permeated legislation and been embodied in the political and industrial order. A competitive system forces the idealistic to some extent to the methods in general

use. If wages are too low, hours too long, conditions of work unwholesome, a Christian may find himself unable to introduce local amelioration except as improved conditions are demanded by the general code and exacted from all the rivals in a given industry. The individual is caught in the net of the existing social order. To protest against its inhumanities, its injustice, its despiritualizing effect, is of little use, except as that protest becomes written into the law of the land and made binding upon Christian and non-Christian alike. It is not merely human souls, then, that must be Christianized, but also the structure of human society and the laws upon the statute-books.

It seems incredible to us to-day that the devout Christians of the past generation should have done so little to Christianize our industrial, political, international order. What were they thinking of! With saloons, houses of vice, vile "shows" in every city, with graft and boodle rampant in government, with newspapers in the grip of selfish class interests, industries run for the private profit of a few lucky owners, with children working long hours when they ought to be at school, with the luxury of the rich jostling the bitter need of the poor, with the nations pursuing policies so selfish that they led to the Great War — what were they doing, communing comfortably with God in their closets, when every ounce of their effort was so sorely needed for the solving of these intricate problems, the steering of the world into a really Christian order?

This purely personal piety was but an emasculated form of the original Christian impulse. Even before the coming of Christ, the great tidal wave of religious reform of which his preaching was the crest had beat

hard against the social evils of the day. Isaiah had summoned men to "seek justice, relieve the oppressed; secure justice for the orphaned, and plead for the widow." Elijah, Amos, Micah are outstanding examples of passionate espousal of the rights of the helpless. John the Baptist, when the multitudes asked him, saying, "What then must we do?" answered and said unto them, "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath food, let him do likewise." And to the publicans, "Extort no more than that which is appointed you." An appeal for the spirit of social service and social justice.

Mr. Louis Wallis has, as clearly as any one, shown this to be the leading motif of the prophetic movement in Israel. "The failure of the Church to advocate the full Gospel of the Bible was involved in a deep misunderstanding of Hebrew history and an almost total misapprehension of that mighty religious warfare which, after prolonged struggles, elevated the worship of Jehovah to supremacy and overthrew the cults of Baal and other heathen gods. This great conflict, which reverberates through the Bible, and thunders out from Hebrew history across the ages, has been interpreted by the church as a theological dispute. . . . [But] the real significance of the conflict between Jehovah and the Baals is not that of a theological warfare, but that of a struggle between justice and injustice in the common life of men. This tremendous fact has been obscured by the churchly emphasis upon theological dogma.

"The books of Judges and Samuel show us that the Hebrew nation of biblical times came into existence at the point of intermarriage and assimilation between two earlier, parent races—the Israelites

from the desert of Arabia, and the Amorites of Canaan. The Israelites, like all wandering, unsettled peoples, believed in common rights to land, democracy, justice and brotherhood; while the Amorites practised the contrary system of land monopoly, aristocracy, slavery and graft. The one system of life was represented by the worship of Jehovah; the other by the cult of Baal.

“When these two parent races combined so as to produce the Hebrew nation, the worships of Jehovah and of the Baals, together with the social ideas and tendencies characteristic of each, continued to stand. Society was presently divided into the rich and poor, the grafters and the oppressed. The unjust customs of the Amorite Baal system began to crowd out the more humane customs identified with the ancient Jehovah system of the Arabian wilderness. The uprising of the people under the lead of the prophets was fundamentally a struggle on behalf of justice against injustice. It was not a theological conflict in the modern sense at all.”

That this social interest was predominant in Jesus needs no laboring. The test which was to decide who should inherit the Kingdom was the test of service; it should be they to whom the Messiah could say, “I was an hungered and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in, naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me, I was in prison and ye came unto me. . . . [For] inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

The early Christians went about, as Jesus had done, helping the sick and the suffering, not scorning the weak and the unfortunate, as the pagan world had done, but holding out to them the hand of sympathy.

The income of the early Church went not for the building of fine edifices, or for music, but for fraternal help, for almsgiving, support of the ill and infirm, widows and orphans, and those visited by calamities. Rich men handed over their property to the Church to use; and this mutual helpfulness was one of the leading causes of the rapid spread of Christianity.

But the Church soon drifted away from this ideal, and became almost wholly otherworldly, suffering that things should go from bad to worse here, for soon the Lord would appear to establish his Kingdom. Its one task came to be to convert the individual, to rescue him out of a wrecked and ruined world. The personal sins were sharply castigated. But the social and political injustices, that had been in the foreground of the preaching of the prophets, were relegated to the concern of worldlings.

Nietzsche was not without justification when he said that the Christian ideal is harmful because it offers a redemption *from* reality, not a redemption *of* reality. By putting off the ideal human life into another world, the Church ceased to care so much about realizing that ideal in this world. There came to be in the minds of Christians what the psychologists call a dissociation. Heaven was the vision of the soul's desire; but it was a repressed desire, that found little outlet in conduct. It was, indeed, a great service to keep the ideal alive, during the centuries when its mundane realization was thwarted by too powerful forces. But now that its approximate realization is coming to be a matter not so hopelessly impracticable, it is high time to utilize the allegiance to that ideal life so long cherished as a dream by Christian people, to wed theory and practice.

The various socialistic and communistic movements

have taken up the task, which the Church should have assumed, of bringing in the age of Social Justice. Rejected and condemned by the Church, they have in turn scorned the Church, for the most part, have become materialistic and unspiritual. On the other hand, Christianity has remained too largely impractical and ineffective. It is a matter for tears that these two great movements of the human spirit should have thus misunderstood and antagonized each other, grown one-sided and narrow. The Church should have made socialism unnecessary.

But it is not too late for the Church to wake up and utilize all the means at hand for redeeming the world. As Charles Stelzle says, "The only way to beat socialism is to beat it to it." The Church can not be neutral in the struggle now on between entrenched privilege and human need. That struggle will not end now until we have worked out a juster and humaner industrial and political order. For the Church to sit by and take no leading part in this struggle is for it to deny its Lord, and to lose its last opportunity of becoming the spiritual guide and inspiration of the world at large.

Individualism in religion is correlative to the individualism in political and economic affairs, which is now so generally discredited. Industry was conceived by the Manchester School as a matter of individual contract between master and man. Politics has been hitherto a matter of struggle between sharply separate nations. Religion was, to the author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, and is to many preachers to-day, a relation merely between the individual soul and God. This conception is fostered by business men and jingoistic politicians who wish to keep religion from interfering with their profits and their con-

quests. So the Church has become, in many quarters, the strongest prop. to the *status quo*; it has preached that poverty is God-ordained, and that economic servility is being content with the state to which we have been called. One of the church-hymns declares:

“The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate,
God made them high or lowly,
And ordered their estate.”

It is hardly an exaggeration, then, when Bernard Shaw writes: “The religious bodies . . . are a sort of auxiliary police, taking off the insurrectionary edge of poverty with coals and blankets, bread and treacle, and soothing and cheering the victims with the hopes of immense and inexpensive happiness in another world, when the process of working them to death in the service of the rich is complete in this.”

In connection with the Interchurch campaign for vast sums of money for the churches, a writer in *The Freeman* for May 26, 1920, asks: “Are the American churches qualified to execute such a trust as they are now seeking to take upon themselves? Do they know actually what social justice is, and what its practical implications are? The relation of the churches to the workers is not exactly a close one, and the reason is not far to seek. The masses are awakening to the fact that in their struggle to wrest concessions from the grudging hand of privilege, the Church is pretty generally to be found against them. Their efforts have been and are denounced from the pulpit nine times to once where they have been supported. Not unnaturally, therefore, they are coming to distrust the churches.”

On the other hand, it is significant that representa-

tives of the upper classes — the classes, that is, that are well off under existing social arrangements — are often staunch supporters of the Church for the explicit and avowed reason that it is the greatest force for the maintenance of things as they are. For example, Roger Babson, well-known expert on the stock-market, writes in one of his bulletins to his clients, dated January 27, 1920: "The value of our investments depends not on the strength of our banks, but rather upon the strength of our churches. The underpaid preachers of the nation are the men upon whom we really are depending rather than the well-paid lawyers, bankers and brokers. The religion of the community is really the bulwark of our investments. And when we consider that only 15% of the people hold securities of any kind and less than 3% hold enough to pay an income tax, the importance of the churches becomes even more evident.

"For our own sakes, for our children's sakes, for the nation's sake, let us business men get behind the churches and their preachers! Never mind if they are not perfect, never mind if their theology is out of date. This only means that were they efficient they would do very much more. The safety of all we have is due to the churches, even in their present inefficient and inactive state. By all that we hold dear, let us from this very day give more time, money and thought to the churches of our city, for upon these the value of all we own ultimately depends!"

The God of things as they are! Is that the Christian God? Surely we, who have had another vision set before us, a vision of a world of real brotherhood for all — surely we Christians can never be content with any social order such as ours. It is profoundly true that no social structure that can be devised will

be ideal unless the men and women who live under it have the spirit of brotherliness in their hearts. But it is equally true — and a far more important truth for the churches to recognize just now — that it is going to be impossible to bring about the millennium through mere preaching and persuasion; it is not enough to soothe men by saying “The Kingdom of God is within you.”

As a matter of fact, that text is undoubtedly a mistranslation — although the Greek words, in themselves, are ambiguous. Jesus would not have told the Pharisees, to whom he was talking, that the Kingdom was within *them*! The context, moreover, shows plainly that the actual meaning was: “The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation (i. e. not so gradually that you can watch it coming), but behold! (before you realize that it is coming) the Kingdom of God is (all of a sudden) in your midst!” This belief in the suddenness of its coming, which is expressed in many other passages, we must discard. But the important point for us is that this passage, when rightly understood, reinforces rather than contradicts the other passages which make clear that the Kingdom is to be a social affair, expressing itself not only in cleansed hearts but also in an outward Christian order. The Kingdom of God (or, to use modern phraseology, the Christian Social Order) will only come if we work for its coming. But it will come if we work for it. We can have, if we will, a reign of justice and righteousness on this earth, here and soon.

The Church, then, must stop thinking so much of itself, its numbers and importance, and must think more of the world. It is its task to secure the embodiment of the ideals of Jesus in our institutions —

which is the only way out of the misery and confusion in which civilization still flounders. There is a grave dissatisfaction with Christianity abroad. It did not avert the Great War, it has not solved the problems of poverty, of distributive justice, of political corruption and international quarrelsomeness. What has been the good of it? This wonderful dynamic, arousing men's emotions, kindling their wills — can we not harness it up better to practical service? It is often held to-day that preaching that deals with political or industrial problems — the big moral issues of the day — is “secular” and “unspiritual.” It used to be thought, indeed, that worldly possessions, an interest in art or politics, marriage, even cleanliness, were incompatible with spirituality. Pious people went apart, became hermits, monks, nuns, ceased to count in the great struggle for the betterment of human life. Not so shall the struggle be won. Every Christian should have — not a great part in this struggle, but some part in this great struggle. Every Christian should really mean what he says when he prays, “Thy Kingdom come *on earth* as it is in Heaven!”

This trumpet call of the social gospel is what will save the Church. Many churches that have responded to it have found their membership doubled and their spiritual life quadrupled. Those organizations — like the Y. M. C. A. — which emphasize most the social ideal are growing most rapidly. Most of our denominations now have Social Service departments; platforms advocating needed social legislation have been adopted by many church conferences. The Federal Council of Churches has a Commission on the Church and Social Service, which is active in stimulating these interests among its component members.

In many towns and cities vigorous campaigns for social advance have been carried on by the united churches. Theological schools are giving more and more courses in "practical Christianity." What Dr. George Gordon recently wrote is becoming every year truer: "American religion is war against evil to the knife, and the knife to the hilt."

Among the many concrete applications of the Social Gospel, we may mention first the battle against bad living conditions, ill-health, undernourishment, and all the evils of poverty. As Mr. Lloyd George declared, in a recent speech, "The churches ought to be like a search-light turned on all slums, to expose, to shame those in authority into doing something." Just as the early church fought against and destroyed the Gladiatorial Contests, so the contemporary church should attack and abolish the inhumanities of our twentieth century civilization.

The early church, of course, practised physical healing, as Jesus had done. The Christian Science Church is emphasizing that activity to-day, and it has been taken up with success by a number of individual churches in the other denominations, for example, by the Emmanuel Church in Boston. There seems to be in this a great potentiality of good. But there are also dangers. To undertake this delicate matter without, on occasion, doing grave harm, requires expert skill. The average minister has, of course, no time either for the requisite training or the work itself. And most church-workers at it would inevitably be amateurish and blundering. This is the age of specialists; and it seems wisest, on the whole, to leave physical healing to those whose profession it is. Certainly mental healing, whether practised by a minister or by a physician, should go hand in hand

with the other approved methods known to the profession. If a church, by offering to heal, disparages these other methods, and leads people to neglect them when needed, it will be responsible on occasion for much suffering and even for premature deaths. And if it uses the successful results of its healing to sustain an irrational philosophy, it is, in another way, doing harm to society.

The Church will always extend its hand of service to the sick and the dying, will seek to alleviate the suffering in the world. But after all, as was said of the famous charge of the Light Brigade, that is magnificent, but it is not war. It is *war* when the Church attacks the *causes* of poverty, suffering, and disease. Instead of being content to patch up the rents, to staunch the wounds inflicted by our cruel social order, the Church must seek to regenerate the system that produces them. It must help so to alter our political machinery as to make graft more difficult and to attract honest and able men into politics. It must keep before our people the ideal of a true democracy, not as something yet attained but as something to work toward with utmost endeavor. It must stand hard against all violence and lawlessness, and at the same time work for the uprooting of the wrongs that engender unrest and class conflicts. The right of free speech must be staunchly upheld, as a fundamental human right, and the essential precondition of the spread of new and valuable ideas.

Above all, the Church should lend its aid to the campaign for a juster distribution of wealth. America is known abroad as the land of plutocracy; one per cent of our families get about fifteen per cent of the total national income, while the lowest ten or twenty per cent have less than enough to keep them-

selves in decent physical condition. The annual income of our richest men is equal to that of a hundred thousand or so of our poorest-paid laborers; if Adam had been working since his supposed advent some six thousand years ago, at a wage of thirty dollars a week, he would have earned in all this time less than some of these multi-millionaires receive in a year.

Moreover, conditions are getting worse instead of better. The cost of living has risen so fast that the poorer classes, as a whole — in spite of some striking exceptions — are getting, in terms of purchasing power, less than a decade ago; while the rich are getting richer by leaps and bounds, and the number of millionaires is rapidly increasing. Business prosperity benefits the rich more than it benefits the poor; for example, the United States Steel Corporation, for every dollar that it paid to employees in 1913 paid \$1.27 in 1916; for every dollar that it paid to stockholders in 1913 it paid \$3.34 in 1916.

But our failure to work out a plan in even moderate degree approaching distributive justice is a commonplace; the point to be here emphasized is that this is a legitimate and important concern of the Church. The attitude that despises these worldly interests will no longer do. Equally by grinding poverty and by superfluous riches is the spiritual life starved; and no one can call a community Christian wherein a part are suffering for the lack of what another part could easily spare. Distributive justice, or something more nearly approaching it, is bound to come; the question is whether the Church is to be in the van or in the rear of the movement that brings it into being.

The Church must pander to no rich pewholders, it must spare no private or public corruption, it must fight with all its might against the laxity, the money-

worship, the extravagance and luxury of this prosperous age; it must refuse to compromise with the world, it must boldly denounce wrongs of any sort, wherever found, especially those wrongs which are not curable by law alone but need the force of a strong public opinion to eradicate.

There are, indeed, some social conflicts with regard to which the Church must not take sides, because it is impossible for men who are not thoroughly conversant with the concrete situations to know for certain where the truth or justice lies. As Dr. C. E. Jefferson writes, "Preachers do not make haste to lift up their voices as umpires and judges in industrial disputes, because they do not feel competent to pass judgment on these intricate matters. Disputes between men are nearly always complicated. So much dust is kicked up, it is difficult to see clearly. There is usually justice on both sides, and wrong on both sides. Both sides are more or less selfish, and more or less dominated by passion, and the situation gets into a snarl because of the lack of considerateness and patience and good feeling on both sides. Moreover, the air becomes filled with rumors and gossip and imaginings, so that it is well-nigh impossible to know what to believe. To pass an equitable judgment therefore is far from easy. There must be a thorough investigation. A huge mass of testimony must be sifted in order to arrive at data on which a valid conclusion can be built. Now, incredible though it seems, a clergyman is one of the busiest men in the community. There is no eight-hour day for him. His parish duties are exacting and exhausting, and he has no time to make the investigation which would give him a right to set himself up as a judge in industrial quarrels."

But there are many social sins with regard to which

the Church has been far too acquiescent. The sins, for example, that we label by the term "profiteering." Food speculation which raises prices, for the sake of private profit, when people are starving or sacrificing much to buy what they must have to live. Ruining competitors, or buying them out by threat of ruin, and then raising the price of the product sold. Making money on the stock market through artificial manipulation of stocks. Using inside information to make money in stocks, in real estate, or elsewhere. Watering stocks, overpaying salaries, and other directoral abuses and unscrupulous forms of financiering. Adulteration, underweight, untruthful advertisements, patent medicine frauds, and other forms of business dishonesty. Why is the Church so timid in the presence of these wrongs?

Or take sins against employees: The employment of children, who should be at school or at play; over-long hours of work; unsanitary places for work; wages too low to allow a decent standard of living; callousness to accidents which could easily be prevented — because it is cheaper to pay the bills than to invest in the available safeguards. In the campaign against such wrongs the Church must assume moral leadership.

Unhappily, the Protestant churches in this country are mainly churches of the upper classes, dependent for their policy upon the opinions of upper-class men and women, and for support upon their pocket-books. They have an unconscious bias against radicalism; they are too often, as Mr. Lowes Dickinson says, "Counsel retained for the present order." In many of these wealthier churches the social emphasis has been bitterly opposed. A recent number of one of our leading religious periodicals contains the following

statement from a Christian minister: "I maintain it is not possible to preach the gospel of God's universal fatherhood and man's brotherhood with its implications applied to business, and industry, and politics, in the wealthier churches, and even in some of those without much wealth, without inviting the active opposition of men in the churches. I made this statement not long ago to a prominent religious journalist and this is what he said: 'You are right; the wealthier churches don't want the social gospel.' Not in twenty years have I held a pastorate in which this was not seriously true."

However widely true this may be, it is held as true by masses of the poorer people. These "alienated masses" will never be reached by the Church while this suspicion is abroad. As Mr. Rockefeller points out, they "regard the Church as the abode of the 'Better-than-thous,' an organization in which men and women are gathered who profess one thing and from which they go out to live another. It is, from their viewpoint, an institution which has little sympathy with them or understanding of their problems."

The Church should be the reconciler of classes, the preventative of social rifts and class wars. It must learn to sympathize with the poor and lowly, as Jesus did. There is a deep hunger for religion among these unchurched masses. But the Church must show that it is out to help them, that it welcomes their free criticism and suggestion, and is not committed to the social philosophy of the well-to-do.

The Church should, finally, be the reconciler, likewise, of nations. Undoubtedly, some sort of a League of Nations is the hope of the world. But how great a leap forward will statesmen dare to take?

And whatever plan they try to put into operation, will it work? The answer to these questions depends upon the state of mind of the people of the nations that are to be federated. It is not exclusively a problem for statesmen and students of international law, though their expert services will be needed. It is in even greater degree a problem for the moralists, the educators, the editors and preachers, and all who can help mould the minds of men. For difficult as it will be to develop a just and workable system of international law and administration, that difficulty is as nothing to that of persuading the people of the component nations to give that loyal allegiance to this new authority which alone can transform it from a paper plan into a working system.

For the crucial fact is this: the acceptance of any supernational authority will involve sacrifice; sometimes material sacrifice, sometimes sacrifice of prestige or supposed "honor," of national aspirations and expectations. Certainly the advantages gained will far outweigh the sacrifices. But that is the case with all morality, and yet morality by no means easily prevails over the selfishness and shortsightedness of men's hearts. Into the field of politics and economic rivalry morality has scarcely begun to penetrate,—its conquest of this great field will at best be pathetically slow. So the one outstanding and obvious duty of the hour is to prepare the way for the working of the League, to make its paths straight. Every church should be mobilized, to awaken and mould the temper which alone can sustain an organized, enforced, and lasting justice and peace.

We must combat, by might and main, that vague optimism that expects things to come out all right if they are let alone. And, on the other hand, we

must combat the pessimism which looks upon any hope of an altered world as naïve and illusory. Our ideal can be realized. But a sense of its worth, and our imperious need of it, are not the only psychological prerequisites to its realization. We must translate that ideal into concrete attitudes and sacrifices for everyday use. We must be willing, not only in the abstract, but with reference to each particular case, to see the general interest of mankind prevail over our own national desire. We must loyally abide by the majority decision of the supernational tribunal, even if we feel it to be unjust or mistaken. We must care more for the welfare of the world than for the welfare of America — just as we now care more (or ought to care more) for the welfare of America than for the welfare of New York or Illinois. In short, what the world needs is a genuine acceptance of the Christian doctrine of the Brotherhood of Man. It is up to the churches to see to it that their members, at least, realize the full implications of that doctrine and are loyal to them.

The social work of the Church is, thus, something for more serious than it is often taken to be. Some churches seem to be becoming little more than jovial meeting places for sociables and entertainments, with a Sunday service thrown in, a service that has an excellent choir and a bright talk on matters of the day. Some modern church-buildings have departed from that style of architecture and decoration which long association or some innate relationship has made expressive of the religious mood, and make an appeal to the eye and imagination scarcely different from that of theatre or concert-hall. When a church degenerates to the point of being a sort of social club or tea-party, pleasant and useful as that social func-

tion may be, it is not to be wondered at that men who are looking for light and inspiration for service stay in their libraries or go out and look up to the hills for their strength.

Some of the churches are still saying, This is not our duty, there are other agencies; we are not our brothers' keepers. The answer to them is, first, that these wrongs are not being widely enough or rapidly enough righted by other agencies, and secondly, that the Church is not true to its mission unless it is doing its share, and that a leading share, in the effort. The Church may well be content to see much of what needs to be done undertaken by other agencies. But it must always remain at least a power-house, to generate the spirit of service; and a clearing-house for service, a place where people shall learn how and where to serve. As Shailer Mathews says, the Church must give "manual training in altruism." By so doing it will appeal not so much to the self-seekers, who want to be "saved," as to those of a finer fibre, who want to help save the world.

CHAPTER SIX

ENCOURAGING FREE THOUGHT

WE turn now to consider the Educational Mission of the Church. We have already suggested the danger to which she has so often succumbed, of teaching a certain set of doctrines as the ultimate truth, and closing men's minds to contrary opinions. By contrast with that common attitude, it may be said at once that the duty of the Church, as of every human institution, is to encourage the freest possible thought. No field must be immune from the cleansing and invigorating power of this thought-activity. Traditional views of God, of Christ, of the Bible — all should be studied by the present generation, with reverence but without awe, or any sense of loyalty except such as their apparent reasonableness and consonance with our experience commands. Whenever any received opinion seems doubtful to any one, he should be not only not rebuked, but encouraged openly and frankly to show his reasons for dissent. In short, our loyalty should be to nothing but the truth, whatever that may turn out to be.

Of course, every dogmatist sincerely believes that he has the truth. But which dogmatist! Here are several hundred varieties of Christian doctrine — not to speak of all the non-Christian views, which surely deserve a hearing. Most (or all) of these views must obviously be at least partly mistaken. Moreover, besides the study of comparative religion, many modern

investigations — Biblical scholarship, ancient history, geology, biology, philosophy — have shaken men's trust in views once confidently held. Observably, the Church has been mistaken in the past, over and over again. Can we be sure that the process of pruning and correcting and revising has reached its end and left us with the final truth? Many men in the Church who in their youth fought hard for beliefs then held heretical and dangerous, seem to look upon that struggle as the last reformation, and oppose the radical ideas of the younger generation as vigorously as they were, in their day, opposed.

The obvious fact is that the Church weakens her position by committing herself to any fixed view; every attack upon that view becomes then an attack upon her, and the advance of knowledge is continually putting her in the wrong. These matters of fact are actually irrelevant to the ideals which the Church exists to teach; and by entangling herself with a particular historical and cosmological view she has brought needless suspicion and discredit upon those ideals.

The dilemma is simple. If there is evidence of the truth of any doctrine, there is no need of its defence by the Church. There is no conspiracy abroad against any particular views; and just as we do not need a church to persuade people of the truth of evolution or of gravitation, we need no artificial protection for the truth in religion. If, on the other hand, the evidence for the doctrine in question is weak and uncertain, then the Church has no moral right to teach it as if it were surely the truth — much less to frown upon those who venture to disbelieve or question it.

Prejudice, partisanship, the premature arriving at

conclusions — these are among the greatest dangers in a democracy. And they are deep-rooted enough in human nature without being deliberately fostered by the Church. One of the most notable aspects of the human mind is the tendency by which, once started seeing things in a certain way, it continues to see things in that way, and becomes blind to even more obvious facts of another kind. The believer goes about wrapped in the atmosphere of his beliefs, impenetrable to light from without, seeing only his own visions. Catholic, Protestant, Jew, Atheist, go through college and through life, surrounded by the same facts of experience, yet each seeing only those which fit his particular belief, and becoming more and more confirmed in it; the brain once set in given channels usually continues to follow those to the end. We are all beset by a chaos of impressions, out of which we select those which easily assimilate themselves with our previous conceptions; the rest we ignore. Facts, like Bible verses, can be found to support any creed; and that with which a man begins his life is in most cases that with which he ends it.

The ideas learned in childhood, the beliefs of parents and friends, the mental conceptions of the formative years, are usually those that the mature man champions. Few can rise above their early environment; unconsciously it colors and directs their thought, and stamps itself ineradicably upon their minds. The faith inherited or early espoused, the atmosphere of the home, the lessons learned at the mother's knee, affect a deeper layer of consciousness than that reached by later reasonings and doubts; however the latter may assail the "proofs" of that faith, they cannot dislodge the faith itself. And so it is that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the

Catholic remains Catholic, the Protestant remains Protestant, the Buddhist remains Buddhist, the Mohammedan remains Mohammedan, in spite of all criticisms or contrary experience. The "proofs" that satisfy the Christian are nonsense to the Jew, those that satisfy the Jew would be nonsense to the Buddhist; but each is content with the cogency of his own. Rare is the man who is willing to question old beliefs and look critically at his faith, to ask himself why he believes as he does, whether he is not the mere product of early training and environment, whether he has contended for his beliefs rather because they were his own than because he had ever earnestly studied the evidence for them, whether he has cherished them because they were precious to him rather than because he had reason to believe them true.

When a man who has been reared in a Christian atmosphere does philosophize he generally either keeps his religion in a separate compartment from his philosophy, becomes a free-thinker in his intellectual hours and a dogmatist in his pious moments; or, beset by the need of harmonizing the conflicting elements in his mind, he spends his thought laboring to prove the truth of his creed, which at all costs he will cling to. Thus, since most men in Europe and America have been reared in an "orthodox" atmosphere, there are many more books written in defence of inherited religious ideas than in the spirit of free and candid inquiry. Our libraries are flooded with works which gloss over the adverse facts and draw the attention to those which are favorable to accepted doctrines, or by ingenious and subtle argument undermine the obvious deductions from those adverse facts. Each new writer has a way of his own to

escape back from the drift of experience to the traditional beliefs, and all sorts of laborious casuistries and hazy evasions pass current.

It is not necessary to impute dishonesty to these writers; convinced as they are that their beliefs are true, aye, and vitally, immanently important to mankind, it is no wonder that they accept any argument, however flimsy, that seems to sustain them. Who cares to criticize arguments that make for what he intensely believes! To criticize the argument would seem like doubting the belief.

But it is not thus that truth is attained. The first step in any approach toward that elusive goal is the spirit of open-mindedness. For this reason the very concept "orthodoxy" is presumptuous and illegitimate. The "orthodox" doctrine is simply, of course, the majority opinion — or rather, the opinion of a few leaders, who were able to stamp their views, by persuasion or by more questionable methods, upon a particular church. Orthodoxies hitherto have always been mistaken, have always been transient; and wherever the conception of "orthodoxy" has been entertained, there has been a distinct brake upon intellectual progress. Even in theology itself the real progress has been made by outsiders, by heretics, ever since the period when the thought of the Church, for a long time fluid and changing, crystallized into the first orthodoxy.

If the term "orthodoxy" is to be retained, it should be to mean the attitude that is true to the spirit of Christ; and, according to one of the earliest of his Apostles, "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." This same great Apostle, voicing his own ideal, wrote "For why is my liberty judged by another's conscience?" If this is the genuinely ortho-

dox spirit, and heresy is wandering from that spirit, our current ascriptions of these terms should be reversed. The so-called orthodoxy of the rigid creeds, which embalm the thought of the theological age, is Augustinianism, or Calvinism, or what not; it is not Christianity.

The "conflict of science and religion"—perhaps we should better call it now a deadlock, since it has lapsed from the forefront of attention—has consisted not so much in a dispute about particular facts as in a fundamental divergence of ideal. The true scientist welcomes criticism, free inquiry, new ideas; hopes for continual progress from old theories to truer ones; is ready to discard his creed whenever he gets fresh light; teaches his disciples to experiment for themselves and work out so far as possible their own conclusions. The Church, on the other hand, came somehow during the early centuries to be a body of people who—though for the most part very ill qualified to judge of such matters—had committed themselves to a certain set of beliefs, and wished, not a free and candid investigation of them, but an unquestioning acceptance. This attitude may have been advisable in the early period of the life of the Church; but to-day it is, as a mere matter of tactics, the worst possible attitude. The modern world distrusts any institution that takes a partisan attitude toward truth. The apparent dread of free thought makes it a position of weakness. Beliefs should be taken on their merits instead of because they are the traditional beliefs of a certain church. The physicist is free to accept or reject any physical theory, according to the evidence as he sees it; if the Christian were equally free to believe or doubt the doctrines worked out by earlier generations, thousands would heartily

join the Church who at present look upon her as the enemy of candor and open-mindedness.

At the present time there are three attitudes fighting for supremacy in the Church. There are the ultra-conservatives, who wish to yield no inch of ground to the spirit of modernism, who obstinately believe that they possess the ultimate and guaranteed truth, who brand historical criticism and naturalistic religious psychology as treason. So long as this attitude can be maintained, it means, for this group, mental quiet, relief from personal responsibility, a comfortable feeling of certitude and permanence. But if it wins the day in the Church, the world will simply move on and leave these "believers" high and dry, without influence, cherishing their illusory certitude in their isolated oasis of peace.

Then there are the grudgingly progressive, who distrust every new idea, but are reluctantly forced along by the current. Giving up one belief after another, always nervously in dread of every new discovery, they live with their backs to the wall. Their thought spends itself in attempts at harmonizing alien ideas; they often use the language of modernism without really catching its spirit, and vainly try to serve two masters. Half conscious of the insecurity of their compromises, they are afraid of every wind that blows. Such an attitude is pathetic and ignominious, and happily can only be transitory.

The only ultimate safety for the Church lies in a fearless welcome to the spirit of free thought and a frank hospitality to criticism. This attitude would make the Church, instead of a perpetual loser, again the leader in intellectual progress. The Church has been on the wrong track. The instinct of self-preservation has led it to oppose the very sciences whose

alliance it needs. It must now be ready to scrap every dogma that seems insufficiently supported by facts; it must cultivate the passion for truth, ever more truth, and have faith in the freedom of the human mind.

If you ask, then, Can a freethinker be a Christian, the answer is, Every Christian ought to be a free-thinker. The antagonism between Christianity and free thought has been a mistaken and tragic antagonism. It has turned millions of men and women who were potentially Christian, potentially of great value to the Church and to the world, into skeptics and scoffers. If we love the Church, we cannot too earnestly insist that Christianity does not imply any intellectual subservience or stagnation. "The only cause," as Professor C. C. Everett once wrote, "for which any one need hesitate to take the name 'Christian' would be the doubt whether he was worthy to bear it."

The question whether we shall proclaim our divergences freely or keep them to ourselves has, indeed, two sides. There are so many, especially elderly people who have leaned hard and long on their particular form of faith, to whom the loss of it, even the questioning of it, is a bitter and demoralizing experience, that we may well shrink from needlessly intruding upon their peace. But on the other hand, to leave the floor to the stand-patters is to miss the opportunity of moulding the Church of the future. The bitterness and loss are, after all, inevitable, if not to the present generation, then to the next. If men will dream dreams they must suffer disillusion. Those who are really to blame for the pain that comes with the loss of traditional beliefs are not those who expose their untruth, but those who taught that true religion was not possible without them.

So acute is this danger that it is essential that Christian ideals be based solidly upon reason and experience, rather than upon the flimsy foundations of miracle and super-rationalism. For the most hopeless immorality is that which follows the reaction from a faith found to be untrue. When all the sanctions of virtue have been put in certain beliefs, and when these are suspected to be baseless, both totter together. Never having learned that religion and morality have their natural and unescapable laws apart from these traditions, men fling them away as the imposture of priests, bogey tales invented to keep them from their rightful pleasures; all restraint seems arbitrary, and they fly to license and excess.

Such an experience was that of Frederic W. Robertson, who was disclosing his own heart when he wrote: "It is an awful moment when the soul begins to find that the props on which it has blindly rested so long are, many of them, rotten, and begins to suspect them all; when it begins to feel the nothingness of many of the traditionary opinions which have been received with implicit confidence, and in that horrible uncertainty begins also to doubt whether there be anything at all to believe."

Even when this confusion of the spiritual and the miraculous leads — when the latter crumbles — to no such lapse of morals, it often brings the sharpest agony of spirit. He who has once attuned his thought and emotion to a particular world-view is apt to feel, when that dissolves, that all is lost; as the death of a loved one may remove all that made life tolerable. The fault, of course, was his who taught such an one to lean so hard on uncertainties; if he had not been brought up on these dreams he would not have come to this despair. So, if a child should grow up in

ignorance of pain and death, would the knowledge of these things, when it came to him, seem to take all beauty and all joy from the world; while if he had always known of them he would have accepted their existence and still found that beauty and that joy that actually, in spite of pain and death, inhere in life. If, then, we have to pay for our fathers' blindness, let us see to it that our children have not to pay for it also.

Moreover, destructive criticism is in the air; and if we do not speak out reverently and gently, the truths we hide will be shouted by profaner lips. It is hopeless to try to save the traditional dogmas. The world is simply getting beyond them. Arguments pro and con matter little, the time-spirit is inexorably leading us on. If we try to save everything we lose everything. The only chance for the Church to have a long and useful future is for her to drop overboard whatever becomes obsolete.

It is not only, however, in theological matters that free thought within the Church is choked, but in the application of Christian principles to concrete situations. As we saw in an earlier chapter, a large proportion of the wealthier people — and they are the predominant force in most of the churches — do not want the "social Gospel." Nor do the pewholders want too concrete and searching a personal Gospel. They prefer their idealism served in the abstract, or applied to Biblical situations, not applied to their own lives. The minister who dares to denounce the pet sins of his parishioners is likely to have an unhappy time of it. The church-members want to save the heathen; *they* do not want to be saved. When Christianity begins to search out their own hardness of heart, it is called "radicalism," and the preacher's freedom of speech is

called "sensationalism." Many an honest preacher has found this degree of freedom of speech insufficient, and has left the pulpit.

Even the theological schools are not yet ready to tolerate genuine freedom of thought on either historical or theological or social matters. The trustees usually avoid the scandal of a public charge or trial; the professor or student who talks too "radically" is quietly dismissed. In the year 1920 the dean of a well-known Episcopal theological school in the East was censured by the trustees because he had joined the Church League for Industrial Democracy, an organization composed almost entirely of Episcopalians, whose object is, in the words of their platform, "to unite for intercession and labor those within our Church who believe it an essential part of the Church's function to make justice and love the controlling motive in all social conditions and who as Christians wish to promote all sound movements looking toward the democratization of industry and socialization of life."

The trustees of the school declared that "there can be no objection to such a platform from the standpoint of Christianity . . . [But] in the present state of the public mind and from the standpoint of the citizen of the world, whether he calls himself a Christian or not, we think it unwise, however, for the members of the faculty of the — Divinity School to associate themselves with this and other similar organizations."

A contemporary periodical — one of the leading American journals of opinion — commented thus on the case: "The next Church conference which discusses why Christianity is losing its hold upon the popular imagination should closely consider this artless revelation. How can religion hope to inspire liberating conviction among its followers when its lay-

men can with impunity chide a priest for acting on what they admit to be the principles of the Gospel instead of those of a 'citizen of the world'? . . . If, as the trustees declare, the principle of the Gospel 'fully and freely applied' holds a solution of industrial and social problems and if a Christian clergyman is placed under the ban for trying to apply fully and freely Christian ethics to these problems, it is surely hard to avoid one disagreeable inference. The Church which permits such a thing to happen is controlled by people who do not want Christian principles fully and freely applied to social and industrial problems."

It is worth while relating one such incident out of many, not to show the illiberalism of the Episcopal Church (that Church is actually in many ways one of the more liberal), but to call attention to a situation which is very widespread. A few theological schools are really free, a few churches, especially the decentralized ones, are really free. But the great mass of churches are very far from espousing the ideal of free thought and free speech, which is at least accorded lip-reverence everywhere outside the churches.

Thus to those who love the Church and long to see her potentialities for good most widely unfolded, the present situation is one of grave anxiety. A large proportion of the community has lost its confidence in her and receives her teaching with open skepticism or secret reservation. The reason for this is simply that the current expressions and explanations of religion, inherited from an older age, are still usually at odds with scientific knowledge and the scientific spirit, which form the intellectual viewpoint of the new times. Selfishness and sin are eternal enemies of religion; but our age is not less earnest, not less aspiring, than others have been; and if it seems less

religious it is mainly because religion has been offered to men in language which many of them cannot receive. The Church generally thinks itself committed to the formulas of a prescientific age; and its historical and theological teachings are usually at variance with the views of the history of religion and the nature of the universe which are now accepted by impartial scholars.

The great majority of men and women who are graduating from our colleges cannot honestly subscribe to the traditional doctrines. They have been reading the great thinkers of the past and present, they have come in touch with too many currents of vital thought, to sink back into the dogmatic lethargy of the historic communions. The great thinkers of the eighteenth century, the nineteenth, the twentieth — the men who really count in shaping the thought of the world — are all heretics. You cannot hide or minimize that fact. In the face of their fearless and forward-looking thought, the evasions and ingenuities of protective apologetics are seen for what they are — mere halting-places on the way to oblivion.

But the discontent, the restlessness and impatience, are not confined to the college-bred, or the scientifically-trained. Masses of people to-day, without being able clearly to justify their doubts, have become skeptical of the Church's historic slogans. They find nothing in their experience or reading that connects with these dogmas, and they have slipped them silently into the limbo of unreality.

What the Church needs, then, is a great wind of free thought — not reckless scoffing free thought from the outside, but earnest constructive free thought from within. She must make a new alliance, she must preach the impartial spirit, the truth-seeking

spirit, she must clear her reputation of partisanship and fostered ignorance. She must frankly discard her obsolete creeds, her absurd hymns, her absurd Sunday school lessons that teach the folk-lore of Old and New Testaments as if it were literal fact; she must learn to use hymns and prayers that express moral ideals and aspirations, to teach not legends and miracles, but the wonder of a purified heart and an altered life. She must definitely and frankly ally herself with science, and use all of its resources in her work. Thus and thus only can she become again the force she once was, the force in the world that those who love her long to see her again become.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SHARPENING THE CHURCH'S THINKING

PERFECT freedom of thought and speech is the prerequisite of mental health in any institution or organization. But it is not enough. Thought may be free but foolish. The Church needs not only the spirit of tolerance and open-mindedness, it needs to train its members, and above all its ministers and writers, in accurate thinking.

Space would fail us to indicate a tithe of the fallacies and confusions current in theological speculation, in contemporary sermons and popular essays on religion. There is no other field in which so much is written and spoken that is hopelessly illogical or muddled. But it will serve at least the purpose of illustration to discuss a few of the points where the current thought of churchmen seems oftenest uncertain and lacking in logical rigor.

First, then, we may consider the underlying question of the authority upon which we rest our belief in the Christian teaching. This is one of the points upon which we should demand absolute clarity. Does the Church rest the authoritativeness of its preaching ultimately upon the fact that the Bible says so, or that Christ says so? Or is it willing frankly to say that the fact that it is written thus and so in the Bible, or that Christ believed it, is no more a guaranty of its truth than is the sincere belief of any high-minded writer or teacher?

The comparative study of religion shows that many sacred books and persons have been regarded as authoritative sources of truth. In the case of the Hebrew-Christian Scriptures it is easy to trace the process through which these very various writings came to be grouped together and gradually invested with the peculiar sanctity which they have had for the Church. It is easy to point to the naïveté of many of the ideas therein expressed, to the historical inaccuracies and inconsistencies, and even to the crudeness of the morality in certain passages of both Old and New Testaments.¹ All this is, of course, inevitable, in an anthology, such as the Bible is, of the literature of a rather primitive, if singularly religious, people. It would certainly not be worth dwelling upon were it not for the persistence of reference in the Church to the Bible as the source of its teaching. An incidental result is that ideas and moral attitudes that would long ago have been generally discredited are assumed to be correct and praiseworthy because of their Biblical context; and men who were passionate, headstrong, fanatical, or grossly immoral are held up to children as Bible-heroes. The arrogant conceit of the Jews that they were the chosen people of the Lord, and therefore justified in invading a peaceful land, destroying the indigenous civilization, and imposing upon it their own culture and religion, is condoned and acclaimed by some of the very people who were loud in their condemnation of a similar tribal arrogance in the Prussians of our own day.

There is no stable half-way point. Either the

¹ The flaws in the Bible have been so often pointed out in detail that it seems unnecessary (and it is always unpleasant) to call specific attention to them here. The present writer has summarized the well-known facts in his *Problems of Religion*, Chap. XVII, *The Interpretation of the Bible*.

Bible is a supernaturally inspired book, and its teachings to be accepted from cover to cover, however difficult for our intellects or repugnant to our moral sense; or else it is a book like any other, to be read with interest and profit, but of no particular value as proof of anything or as standard for our ethical judgments and religious beliefs. The former view has been rejected by the whole world outside of narrowing "orthodox" circles. But there are many in the Church who have not frankly and squarely recognized that the other view described is the only alternative.

For example, Paul's picture of the Judgment Day in the fifteenth chapter of I. Corinthians, which would seem simply fantastic to us if we really grasped his meaning, is seriously read at Christian funerals, as if the fact of its being in the Bible must make it mean what Christians currently believe, and somehow guarantee the truth of that belief! The obvious illogicality of Paul's arguments, and the fact that the whole thing is simply current Jewish speculation on the part of a man who, though genuinely Christianized in his spirit, remained to the end the Græco-rabbinic theologian that he had been before conversion, are ignored, because it is in the Bible!

It is an ungracious act to find flaws in the Bible, or illusion and prejudice in the words of the heroes and authors thereof. But the Church cannot regain the confidence of the educated until it recognizes clearly that its source of authority is not the words of any historic teacher, or of any Book, but simply the evidence of human experience, with the conclusions logically deducible therefrom. There is much human experience in the Bible that is of utmost value for our thought; but it must be subjected to the same critical scrutiny that we should apply to any other

documents, and used with the same sifting and the same caution. Christian religious psychology is much like any other religious psychology, as naïve, as liable to misconceptions, to exaggeration and false inference. The possession of great spirituality, even of great mental ability, by no means implies correct thinking. If false premises are assumed, openly or unconsciously, the keenest reasoning will lead to error. Indeed, men of moral insight and religious fervor are very apt to be more than commonly lacking in the critical faculty; the two interests are divergent, and few can keep both warm-hearted and cool-headed. So that a caution in accepting the beliefs of the founders of our faith may go hand in hand with the heartiest appreciation of their genius and a loyal intent to cherish the flame that they kindled.

The Historical Method is a very recent achievement of the human mind, and a very great achievement. If every minister of the Gospel and writer on religion could be compelled to read such a brief study of it as Mr. H. B. George's *Historical Method*, the slipshod acceptance of Biblical narratives at their face value would soon become a matter of the past. Memory is notoriously unreliable; and when, as in religious chronicle, biography, or autobiography, the writer has eager convictions, he is almost bound to read more into incidents than occurred, to touch up an episode to make a good story out of it, to remember events somewhat more in line with the way they should have occurred to accord with his background of beliefs. When such stories, before being written down, are passed on orally for some years, from mouth to mouth, especially in a hero-loving and wonder-loving age, and especially when the tellers have a faith to preserve and justify by every available means, the

final form of the narrative may differ to any extent from the facts from which it sprang.

The wonder is that historians have been able, even confusedly, to reconstruct a historical picture of the life of Christ and of the earlier and later events referred to in the Bible. It ceases to be a wonder, however, and becomes a matter of skilful historical research, when one studies in detail the clues and the processes of inference which are steadily making that reconstruction more convincing. There is much, of course, concerning which we shall never now be able to know what the actual facts were. But to a far greater degree than would once have seemed possible, we can now disentangle fact from fancy and understand the natural train of causes that produced our religion, and that led to its embellishment by legend and myth and miracle. Such a scrupulously historical point of view is the only attitude worthy of the Church, and the only one that can ultimately survive. Church-literature, Sunday-school texts, and current preaching need a great deal of pruning and restatement to adapt them to that ideal.

But it is not only in matters of history that ecclesiastical thinking needs to be sharpened, the lack of logic is even more apparent in current apologetic. Reason and experience, though the proper criteria for belief, are far from being its usual causes; few people ever learn to judge dispassionately of arguments. For the believer's conviction does not really hinge upon them. Secure in his assurance of the truth, he can afford to scorn any petty word-splitting, flaw-picking criticisms of his arguments. What though he has not yet learned to refute all the skeptics and explain all the mysteries, an assured truth is not weakened by poor defence!

For this reason the preacher and theologian are rarely good logicians. They may show much ingenuity in their arguments, but they do not believe because of the arguments; the belief is antecedent, the apologetic subsequent, and of secondary importance. It is possible to defend almost any opinion so plausibly that those who are biased in its favor will not detect the fallacies or tacit assumptions. And indeed, the number of those who have undertaken the arduous training that would fit them for this difficult rôle of critic of arguments is very small; our system of education does little to teach that most valuable acquisition. In most matters wrong processes of thought are checked sooner or later by being confronted by facts inconsistent with their conclusions; but where the matters reasoned of are as much "in the air" as religious controversy is, where the results of reasoning cannot be directly and obviously disproved by concrete tangible facts, there are few so well trained as to see that the method of reaching the given conclusions was wrong and could not lead to reliable results. It might be well to add to a work on the Historical Method, in our curriculum for prospective ministers and theologians, such a volume as Mill's *Logic*. A careful adherence to its lessons would rid the world of a vast amount of rubbish!

Among the most slipshod of contemporary thought-processes are some of those that take refuge under the caption "pragmatism." It is said on every hand that this or that belief is true because it "works." Strictly speaking, to say that a belief works should mean that it serves to summarize and predict experience; that data are observed to coincide with what it would lead us to expect, while nothing is observed that is out of harmony with it. Even taken in this

valid sense, "working" is not an infallible test of truth, for our data are usually very fragmentary, and often very confused. It often happens that although nothing has come to light that contradicts a certain theory, nothing has come to light either that would contradict a very different belief. And it oftener yet happens that certain facts seem to make against one theory and other facts seem to make against the alternative theory. Almost any theory "works" so long as you look only at certain classes of facts and ignore others. As Bernard Shaw puts it, "most theories will work if you put your back into making them work."

The actual situation is that most historic theological doctrines can be confronted with facts with regard to which they do not "work." The customary evasion is to counsel humility and faith in the presence of these "mysteries." To which the obvious answer is that if we could certainly know the theories in question to be true, we could await in patience the resolving of these difficulties; but that if the theories are to be recommended to us on the ground that they "work," then the existence of cases in which they do not seem to work cancels the evidence which recommends them.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that "works" is popularly taken to mean "inspires." If a belief leads to happiness and morality, it is thereby to be accredited as true. For example, a recent liberal theologian writes: "Of course, the kind of life that religious belief creates must be the ultimate judgment pronounced upon the truth of the religious philosophy involved." This argument rests upon an implied major premise that whatever belief leads to a noble life must be a true belief. But, on

the contrary, experience repeatedly has shown that delusions may inspire men to noble living; the inspirational effect of a belief has nothing whatever to do with its truth. It inspires because it is *believed* to be true; whether it actually is true or not does not affect its inspirational value for the believer. Moreover, many widely contradictory beliefs have stimulated and consoled men; and (as a matter of fact), all sorts of divergent doctrines are actually being accredited by their disciples on the ground of their practical value.

The implicit major premise is occasionally made explicit, as in Father Tyrrell's *Lex Orandi*, where he declares that "no belief can be universally and perpetually useful unless it also be true," and goes on to say that "in the case of the Christian creed the experience of the Christian *orbis terrarum* offers a criterion as to such universal and perpetual usefulness." The chapters that follow attempt to show in detail the usefulness of the various items of the Catholic creed, with the assumption in each case that because inspirational they must be true. A similar argument is offered for the truth of the central doctrine of Christian Science, that there is no evil. No other doctrine, perhaps, in recent years, has had such striking practical effects. But indeed, what religion has not been a comfort and an inspiration to its disciples! The whole argument is, of course, a mere *argumentum ad populum*, a fallacy which no really disinterested seeker after truth would commit. The observable practical value of a belief may lead us to tolerate it even if we have reason to believe it untrue, may lead us even to "will to believe" it, if we can, in the lack of convincing evidence one way or the other. But if we are ever to get out of the hopeless muddle in which

religious belief now wallows, one of the first steps will be to look not for "satisfactory" and soothing beliefs, but for objective evidence — against as well as for the various theories that are in the field; and to refuse to bias our judgment by the fact that one of those theories is in harmony with our desires. Many truths are unpalatable and depressing. But in the long run it pays to look them squarely in the face. We must get away absolutely from the labeling of views as "dangerous," "upsetting," "skeptical," "demoralizing," "unworthy." The one and only question for self-respecting men should be, What are the facts?

It is doubtless true that a blunt and literal statement of the facts that concern some moot problem is not always to be advised. The avoidance of ambiguity, the sharpening of our thinking, is not the only virtue. To share the religious life of our fellows, to use words that shall convey to them adequately the spiritual truth that we wish to convey — this too is a great good, and to many seems a far greater. There is some kernel of truth, probably, in all or most of the dogmas; and even if those truths could be accurately expressed in the bare and dry language of science, they would very likely lose thereby their vividness and emotional power. Dogma is poetry, dogma is symbolism; and our passion for literal exactness must not blind us to the value of rhetoric and trope. Just as the exact account of our duties to our countrymen seldom arouses patriotic emotion, while the singing of a national hymn may bring tears to the eyes and a new resolve to the will, so in practical religion the most useful language is not the meager and statistical phraseology of science, but the sort of language that the prayer-books use.

It is possible, then, for an honest man to say, in respect to current dogmas which he can not literally believe: There is, after all, a heart of truth in these sacred words, which we are likely to forget if we abandon forthwith the old formulæ. This is the part that made the rest plausible, because here the conception touched fact. By retaining this mode of language, then, we can meet with those who are religious but not scientific, and express our common religious experience in common terms. If, on the other hand, we discard these familiar forms and vehicles of our religious life, we can hardly help losing something also of the vividness and unction with which we once expressed our spiritual experience and aspiration. The hallowed phrases root deep in our hearts; and so, while we cannot accept them as literal statements of fact, we may be content to use them, with others, as a symbolic expression of what is deeply vital and eternally true.

Such an attitude is possible to an honest man; but it is not altogether satisfactory. This stretching and straddling, this shirking of candid and outspoken statement, this temporizing and concealing of convictions is dangerous and unfortunate. Is not, perhaps, the greatest good, after all, absolute candor? Do hazy uncertainties and symbols taken in different senses by different people make for spiritual health? Will not needed changes in our belief be retarded by this hushing up of divergencies? Is it not true that pulpit-utterances are commonly taken by the world with distrust and allowances? The clergy stand under a widespread suspicion of hypocrisy and cant. The circumlocutions by which ministers who read and think try to harmonize the conceptions to which they find themselves led with the stock doctrines of the

Church, are often repeated with jeers and shrugs by those who have not themselves felt this dual allegiance.

Certainly this attempt to straddle has resulted in a lowering of the quality of the Christian clergy. Many pure and noble men there are, and here and there one of marked ability; but they are too often to-day men of warped minds and narrow horizons. The ablest men from the colleges usually go into business, into the law, into medicine, but shun the ministry. They will not be bound by the beliefs or the phrases of their grandfathers. Some of the oldest and richest theological schools have dwindled till they now boast but a handful of students, and the demand for pastors in many denominations is considerably greater than the supply. The more alert and able of the theological students do not fail to discover the dubious nature of the Church's creeds. And many are the inward struggles that go silently on in the schools. Not a few abandon their intended career, others forget their doubts in practical work or decide that they can profess the creeds "in a sense"; despair and even suicide are not unknown. Surely all this — and much more that might be said — is a significant sign of the fatal mistake the Church is making in continuing to cling to old formulas and expect allegiance to antiquated creeds. These creeds are "exactly as appropriate to the century of Copernican astronomy and Darwinian evolution and scientific Biblical criticism as one of the ancient Roman galleys would be beside one of our latest type of turbine-driven ocean liners."

Matters are mending, however. And the great hope lies in education. As yet only a very small percentage of our people have even a high-school education,

and but one out of five hundred has been to college. When that percentage is increased tenfold, there will be either a great intellectual revolution inside the churches or a great withdrawal from them. That it may be the former and not the latter requires the earnest efforts of all who care to see the America of the future a religious nation.

CHAPTER EIGHT

WHAT HAVE WE THAT IS CERTAIN?

LIBERAL minds are awakening everywhere to the dangers of dogmatism, and are attaining to that stage of intellectual maturity that asks for evidence of proffered beliefs, for verification of religious truth, in the same sense in which the laws of gravitation or of evolution are verifiable in universally repeatable experience. This is a healthy condition of things; it is the goal of much patient labor and earnest pleading from our intellectual leaders. One of the greatest obstacles to the progress of man and the attainment of truth has been an over-easy acquiescence in the plausible, an inert contentment with what appeals to the emotions or satisfies the heart, a feeble readiness to yield assent when no evidence has been shown which should properly convince the understanding. It is this proneness to the hasty formation of belief that breeds bias and prejudice, and confuses our advance with so much mutual misunderstanding and thwarting. For the correct solution of all our problems, physical, political, moral, religious, we need the temper that weighs and waits, that scrutinizes judicially all sides of a debatable proposition, analyzes cautiously, discriminates, and maintains for long a skeptical attitude toward alleged facts, proposed remedies, and impassioned appeals for credence; the temper that puts investigation before acceptance, that "will not make its judgment blind." We have made

so many mistakes, we have pinned our faith to so many ideas that turned out to be untrue — I say “we,” meaning all the generations of men, for no one of us is guiltless though the Christian Church has far more than her share of blame in the matter — that those who have studied at all carefully the conditions of human progress must heartily, and with great relief, welcome the growing spirit of criticism and of caution.

There is, indeed, in “orthodox” circles, a profound distrust of this spirit. It is felt to be subversive of the faith, the sign of an unbelieving and materialistic generation. But why? It is not criticism that is to be deprecated, but apathy. The hopeless man is he who is not interested enough to look for evidence of spiritual truth, the mentally inert or worldly minded man. If our religion is true, it can stand the test of doubt. Nay, it must, more and more, emerge into prominence against the fading background of discredited untruths. The dread of free investigation and discussion is quite unnecessary. Christianity — at least enough in Christianity to make it stand out as the greatest thing in the world — is experimentally verifiable, the evidence for its truth is at hand. However dubious may be the historic creeds — men’s attempts to express and explain — the underlying strata of the religion consist of experiences, enacted in the inner life of Christ, of Paul, of all those to whom the religion has been real and precious, and reenactable in our lives if we will but open our hearts and seek to learn the secret thereof. Christianity, we must continually repeat, is a way to live, a solution for life; and those who have learned the way, who have solved their life-problem, know that they have attained to great and precious truths. Who more

eagerly than the Christian, then, should welcome the spirit that comes looking for witness? Instead of telling a man what he "ought" to believe, we should point him to the facts. We should point to Christ, to the saints, we should try to show him the way in his own life, we should say, "Come and see!"

Phillips Brooks once spoke of "the disposition that prevails everywhere to deal with things from the outside, discussing their relations, examining their nature, and not putting ourselves into their power." The proper task of the preacher is less to argue about Christian truth, as something in need of subtle defense, than to make vivid and real the beauty of holiness, the nobility of Christ's message, its summons and its peace. If one deals in the abstract arguments, *pro* and *con*, the arguments *con* may, not seldom, make more of an appeal than the arguments *pro*; while to fail to give the arguments on both sides is unfair play, an illegitimate use of the platform or pen, and yields at best but a temporary advantage. In any case, a suspicion is aroused by much argumentation that Christianity is throughout a speculative and debatable matter, with nothing empirical about it. This is a very unfortunate and needless result. There is much that is unquestionable in Christianity — unquestionable not only by Christians, but by anybody with any maturity of experience. Of these fundamental truths — which may not be entirely peculiar to Christianity, but have at least been by it best expressed and most persistently taught — we may say with Emerson, "There is a statement of religion that makes all skepticism absurd."

These verifiable truths of our faith are also the most practically important and vital truths. It is, then, a mistake to obscure their importance and the fact

of their verifiability by mingling them inextricably in our creeds with our inferences, our hypotheses, and our hopes. These latter may be precious to us, they may be true; but it is a tactical error to refuse to discriminate. The Church should put into prominence the verifiable truths and offer them first to those she would bring into her fold. She should say to the world: "Come with us and see certain things that we see; try certain ways of doing things that we find good; get this new perspective and valuation; see if this practical Christianity does not seem worth while."

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." The preaching of the cross, of self-denial, was to the Greeks foolishness, as Paul discovered. Was it foolishness, or was it the highest wisdom? Any wide study of human experience shows conclusively, I believe, that, though it is subject to distortion and excess, the teaching of Christ and of Paul on this matter is one of the great truths of the spiritual life. *Entbehren sollst du* — "Renunciation must thou make" — even the worldly Goethe felt it. We must lose our lives really to find them; only through self-sacrifice can we come to a great and lasting happiness. There are two ways to become convinced of this. One is to study the lives of great men, past and present, and see which attained to a wide happiness and a genuine success. The other is to try both methods, the worldly and the Christian, oneself. This practically means trying the Christian method, since our natural instincts have probably led us all to a trial of the worldly method quite sufficient to reveal its superficiality and unsatisfactoriness. A Nietzsche or a Schopenhauer, some over-egotistical or wild-fancied

eccentric, and many a hot-blooded youth, may reject the lessons of history and experience, but the normal and mature man can not but yield his assent to the Christian paradox of renunciation.

This great truth may be accepted at the outset on the authority of Christ, as one who knows more than we of these spiritual truths. In many matters we have to live temporarily by faith, not by sight; and on whom can we lean for religious insight, if not on him? But in the end we shall not need to take it on his authority, or on that of the Bible or the Church. It is wrong, then, for the Church to point merely to authorities; she must never let the world forget that behind her revered words of Scripture, her precious teachings of Christ, lie the great facts of human experience which prove them true.

Just as with the teaching of renunciation, is it with the teachings of purity and service, which bulk so large in the gospels. These two things, taken together, constitute "pure religion and undefiled"—"to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction" (which was the local form that the spirit of loving service took) and "to keep oneself unspotted from the world." Both of these great secrets of life run counter to the natural inclinations of man, and require a certain conversion or turnabout, a certain regeneration or rebirth. The natural man is lustful and self-indulgent, selfish and callous to the needs of others. In the heyday of his strength he may scorn the Christian teaching as goody-goody, fit only for milksops and parsons. But the mature experience of life is against him. Why is it that generation after generation has to learn these truths for itself by bitter experience? It is mainly, of course, owing to the impulsive nature of man, impatient of re-

straint, loath to learn from others. But in some degree it may be due to the fact that these most vital of all truths have been taught to a skeptical generation too often as the pronouncements of authority rather than as verified by centuries of repeated human experience.

Is it so with the belief in God? Absolutely, yes. Arguments from design, from the necessity of a first cause, and the rest of the older theological stock-in-trade, are of about as much use in propagating Christianity to-day as the text-books of a generation ago are in teaching physics. Of vastly more value is it to adopt here also the empirical method, to point to God as revealed in nature, in the lives of the saints, preëminently in Christ, but also as the Holy Spirit in each of our hearts. God is not to be blindly believed in because the belief is so sweet, and atheism so sad, nor to be accepted as the result of acute and ingenious reasoning. God is to be seen in human life, to be loved, to be worshiped. One must, of course, have one's eyes opened to this kind of use, one's spiritual vision must be trained; God will never be found by men who are accustomed to look everywhere for private advantage, for sense-enjoyment or worldly profit. It is the pure in heart that see God. And the seeker must know what he is looking for. He will not find a great King sitting on a throne, arbitrarily interfering in the affairs of men to manifest his glory. What he will find is a great Heart of goodness in the world, a great Power making for righteousness and all good, in spite of the rebelliousness and sin of individual men; a Power that can enter the soul that yields itself and save it from the clutch of sin. If he listens, he will hear the voice of God in his heart — not necessarily an auditory sensation, an actual voice (though

that it may be ¹), but a guidance of some sort, a command, a beacon light, in whatever psychological stuff it may clothe itself — which he will know to be the Voice of God because it will lead him to peace and joy, and harmony with the great Heart of good that surrounds his individual life.

Many questions may, indeed, arise concerning the nature of God which it is not within the power of experience to settle. All the truths about God that may lie beyond our experience are not verifiable, and with regard to them we must either be agnostic, or live by faith, or trust in those spiritual seers that we may believe to have a vision more penetrating than our own. But a man who looks for evidence can find a revelation of God within his own horizon ample for his practical needs. And for fuller knowledge of God he can, if need be, be content to wait.²

It needs no abstruse reasoning, either, to show the actual, if gradual, and often thwarted, coming of the Kingdom of God on earth — that reign of righteousness and peace which Christ foretold and for which he bade men prepare. The faith in and the working for this new age, when injustice and cruelty and sin should be done away, was the central feature of Christ's teaching, and is receiving at last a revived emphasis from the Church. It is surely the assurance of and the dedication of effort for this bettered human life that gives our daily humdrum, sin-maimed existence its greatest worth, and enables us to bear the pain of the present. We may have to restate our hopes and our duties in modern language; the phrase-

¹ For cases, see William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*. Such cases are, of course, unusual.

² If the writer may be pardoned for another reference to his own book — this matter will be found more fully discussed in *Problems of Religion*, Chap. IX, *The God of Experience*.

ology intelligible and moving to the Jew of the first century, with its local flavor and provincial note, needs reinterpretation to meet our needs. We are too democratic to like the term Kingdom, and the eschatology of the Jews seems in our wider perspective somewhat grotesque and over-impatient. But the great hope and the great duty that flamed in Jesus' gospel can still fire our hearts. And the kingdom is coming "with observation," though it is not so much a "Lo, here!" or "Lo, there!" that reveals it as the long vista of history. Pessimism is shallow observation. Great as is yet the evil in human life, amelioration is real. And every man knows in his heart that his duty is to work with those who are battling with the evil and helping to bring in the new time.

The necessity and duty of renunciation, of personal purity and loving service, the reality of God, the faith in and ardor for the coming of the kingdom of God on earth — these are the keynotes of Christ's teaching. What later Christianity has added has been chiefly its recognition of Christ as the great revealer of God and spiritual truth, and its reverent devotion to him. This is, indeed, an indispensable aspect of the religion. In him we find, made concrete and living and appealing, the truths that when abstractedly grasped lack power and poignancy for the soul. Christianity is, for many people, first of all a personal loyalty to Christ.

But it is not because Christ is known by supernatural revelation to be a superhuman being, not because he is known to have been born of a virgin, and to have risen from the dead, that we give him our allegiance; it is because the collective experience of his followers and the verdict of our own individual experience justifies and verifies his teaching. No

series of portents and miracles would lead us to him if that teaching were coarse and low. His divinity consists in the fact that he was able to attain our ideal for human nature. Whatever extraordinary physical powers he may have possessed, his divineness lay in his character and conduct. It matters little for practical purposes how strong, or how weak, is the evidence for the gospel miracles. Certainly, in these times, the less the Church thrusts them upon the would-be convert, the better; they are as apt to breed distrust as trust. The important thing is to help him to see the purity, the power, the challenge, the heroism of Jesus' life; to awaken his reverence, love, and allegiance, and the desire to follow in his steps. Was Christ divine? Does he rightly deserve discipleship? Do not argue it, bid him come and see. In the normal man a candid and thorough study of the life of Christ will be pretty sure to breed the same feeling of reverence that the sight of his serenity in the agony of death brought to the heart of the centurion—"Truly this was the Son of God!"—or, as we should more properly translate the phrase, "Truly this was a Divine Man."

So far, then, the Christian teachings may welcome the spirit of doubt and inquiry, confident of proving themselves true the more firmly with each thorough investigation. But we must freely confess that there is one great hope of Christianity which outleaps our present evidence, the hope of personal immortality. We may feel that certain of the current arguments are strong, we may pin our trust to the statements of Christ—though they are few and obscure; we may cleave to Paul's fuller but rather antiquated argument; we may hold the belief as a corollary of our faith in God, or we may simply leave it as a belief, a

hope, that outruns the evidence. In any case, let us by all means believe, if we can; let us urge belief in what most men need to believe in for their encouragement and consolation. But let us not pretend that this, too, lies within the range of present proof. To thrust it upon a candid and hesitating inquirer before he has been won to the Christian life is sometimes to alienate him even from the truths that are firmly supported by evidence.

In short, to lump all the traditional Christian teachings together as equally coercive to the intellect is to do grave injustice to the strength of the really empirical truths; the critic is sure to pounce upon the least fortified doctrine, and in the exposure of its empirical weakness all will suffer. On the other hand, we need not fear to acknowledge that in this matter or that — as in so many other matters than religion — we believe where we can not prove. Such a candid admission disarms the critic, and brings into relief the fact that we can prove so much. For the practically important features of a liberal Christian faith stand within the limits of the indisputable; and if at one point or other our faith reaches beyond our sight, the most scrupulous intellect need take no shame therein. Indeed, however, it is, for most of us, a waste of time to think too much about the future or the remote. Sufficient unto the day is the good thereof, and the work thereof. What is essential in Christianity deals with the here and now.

CHAPTER NINE

EVOLUTION IN RELIGION

HOWEVER we may feel about the traditional theology of Christianity, we must never forget that ours is a living and growing religion. The static conception of Christianity is its worst enemy. If current Christian theology seems to us partly dubious or untrue, we are free, as were the Christian thinkers of the past, to revise, expurgate, reformulate its expression.

It may be a source of encouragement and suggestion to note the forces which are visibly at work, moulding human religions, including our own, towards the type of greatest usefulness to man.

Of the countless varieties of historic and prehistoric religion only a few have survived to our day. These represent a long development, and are still in process of change. Can we discern any dominant causes that have brought about the survival of just these religions and determined their growth in just these directions; or deduce from our survey of the past their probable future direction of growth?

It is no explanation to assume the unfolding of a universally present "religious instinct." Religious evolution is not a self-contained process, bearing within itself its own explanation, as an acorn contains the germ of all that the oak is to be. There is no single religious instinct. Rather, there have been innumerable forces at work producing continually new variations in ideal and belief. Of these a few

have outlived the others. It is a plain case of survival of the fittest.

We must discriminate between originating causes of religious variations and survival-causes. The former have been too numerous even to summarize here. They are to be understood in terms of contemporary social and intellectual changes. Whatever activities and ideas are vital in the life of any tribe or nation are seen to be reflected in religious practices. A religion may veer in any direction under the influence of the fortunes of the people, their changing science and philosophy, their political and cultural status, the conscious or unconscious manipulation of priests. The dominance of this cult or that has been determined largely by the physical superiority of the conquering nations. And then, great personalities have moulded the religion of their countrymen in the direction of their personal visions and convictions. In short, all sorts of forces, pushing in all sorts of directions, have reinforced or opposed one another, and in this locality or that have produced almost every sort of imaginable faith.

Yet underlying this tangle of forces there has been, on the whole, a drift in certain definite directions; a few constant causes have determined, in the long run, which of the many competing cults should survive. In the end, those varieties of religion seem likely to prevail which best meet three deep-rooted human needs: the need for consolation, for inspiration, and for comprehension. Conceptions and practices which are more cheering and hope-giving, those which are more moral or spiritual (i.e., lead the believer into the better ways of life), and those which are more rational (i.e., more in harmony with unprejudiced observation of what is true or probable), have an

inherent stability which is lacking to the gloomy or fearful beliefs, to the lower ideals, or to the more fantastic conceptions.

These three survival-causes cannot *produce* the higher varieties of religion; they simply operate, like the forces that Darwin discovered at work among organic forms, to preserve and spread such few among the many variations as are best fitted to survive. It is exactly so, of course, in the field of morals, in the field of art, in every field where change is at work. Forces largely irrational, irrelevant to the values produced, keep new species forever emerging; but their *rationale*, their value, determines in the end which of them shall remain in existence.

Let us illustrate this threefold process of natural selection. And first, the survival-value of the element of consolation in a religion. Why have most Christians ceased to believe in original sin, in hell, in the Calvinistic type of God, who grimly damns the great majority of his helpless creatures to eternal torment? Not because of the discovery of a lack of logic in the arguments of those who preached these doctrines; few who reject them to-day could say what those arguments were. They are not interested in the arguments, because, argument or no argument, their souls refuse to entertain the beliefs; they are too depressing. Gloomy beliefs may long ride men, like a nightmare; but sooner or later they must succumb to more buoyant views. Men crave consolation, men want to hope; and they will not forever be satisfied with world-views that cross this fundamental need.

Buddhism may perhaps be cited as a pessimistic religion that has survived. But Buddhism is not pessimistic in relation to the religions it conquered. It was a religion of deliverance from the depressing

world-view prevalent at its inception; it has been a vast comfort to millions who without it would have known no hope of escape from the pitiless round of unhappy reincarnations. And Buddhism to-day, when confronted with Christianity, is relatively unstable, in large measure owing to the latter's larger and more vigorous faith.

The rapidity with which primitive Christianity spread, like a prairie fire, over the parched and hope-starved Roman empire was due, among many causes, to the great hope that it offered. Few stopped to examine proofs, few were capable of appraising the evidence by which its assertions were supported. It was accepted as thirsty men accept a draught of water. A new value was at once added to life; its accidents became unimportant in the light of the future. Christ, the Good Shepherd, came closer to the heart than the Jewish Jehovah, and far closer than the cold and impersonal God of Greek philosophy, offering a more intimate personal relationship and a more beautiful hope in the beyond. The old order was soon coming to naught, the New Age at hand. It is small wonder if these Christians went about with radiant faces and rejoicing hearts, drawing gradually to their fold those that labored and were heavy laden, seeking the rest that Christ had promised to those who followed him.

Another example of the survival-value of optimism in a religion is to be found in the growth and spread of monotheism. The line of development from polytheism to monotheism is not a highway along which mankind as a whole has advanced. On the contrary, it is only in a few exceptional cases that such an evolution occurred. But when a monotheistic belief had once become anywhere firmly established, it was

almost certain ultimately to outstrip and overcome its rivals. For polytheism, though a more natural and instinctive reaction to the complex and often opposed forces of nature, leaves the mind confused and hope uncertain. However favorably disposed a god may be, his power is limited by that of other and perhaps less beneficent beings. Athene, for example, was sure to work for the city that bore her name; but Hera's power was also to be reckoned with. Jehovah would fight for his tribes, but so would Baal and Chemosh for theirs. Only when the belief should grow up of a single God of all peoples, all-powerful and beneficent, could men feel wholly confident in his strength.

Actually, a monotheistic belief developed in several places, under the influence of quite different causes. But the monotheism of the Greeks was too speculative, too lacking in roots in the soil, to spread far beyond the circle of the educated or survive the overthrow of Hellenic culture. The monotheism (if it may be so called) of the Brahmanic priests was likewise too speculative, too lacking in warmth of human interests and idealism, so that it waned before the more spiritual atheism of Buddha — though it is noteworthy that the hunger for a God to trust in quickly found another object in the worship of Buddha himself.

In any case, the monotheism of ultimate importance to the world was that which developed within the Hebrew religion. The process of development can be readily traced in the Old Testament, and is now familiar to all students who approach it in the modern historical spirit. The enhancement of Jehovah's powers until he came to be thought of as the only God worthy of worship, and finally as the only existing

God, was a process close to the practical life of men; it was linked with historical and local events, and brought into play the patriotism and moral power of an intense and ardent people. Instead of offering a vague hope, such as we find in Marcus Aurelius, that events are ultimately governed by reason and therefore to be patiently, even loyally, acquiesced in, it brought, in its eventual form, a pledge to the individual of the fulfilment of his personal hopes and longings. A belief so inspiring as this found ready and tenacious acceptance; given favorable conditions, it was bound to extend its influence far.

But if religion owes its origin and actual development in part to man's need of deliverance from the fear of the Powers behind nature, and his longing for a hopeful view of his life and destiny, it also in part owes the course of its development to his need of deliverance from himself, from his restlessness and cross-purposes, from his weight of selfishness and sin. The pleasures which he seeks too often turn to ashes in his hands; the passions that lure him on leave him dissatisfied; he is the victim of his own impulses and longings, often impotent to control his own soul and without any satisfaction for his bewildered heart. In a happy environment, as, for a brief period, among the classic Greeks, he may live in the moment and avoid any marked revulsion of spirit. But in a less healthy-minded community, as throughout the Greco-Roman world at the advent of Christianity, or, earlier, in India at the advent of Buddhism, there is an insistent craving for a higher and more spiritual life. Any religion that links with its assurance of hope high moral ideals is so much the more likely to win converts, offering to them the prize of purity and loyalty and self-forgetting service, which alone can

lift the human heart above internal discord and disillusion and give life dignity and lasting joy.

Examples of this survival-value of moral idealism in a religion can be found on every hand—in the triumph of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, Mohammedanism, over the faiths they respectively superseded, or in the dominance of those pagan cults that symbolized and enshrined patriotism and civic loyalty. We are prone to forget this earnest and deeply moral aspect of the pagan religions. But, like loyalty to flag or sovereign to-day, loyalty to the gods and goddesses of the Greek and Latin states was a symbolic and imaginative way of expressing the community spirit, which drew men out of their selfishness, gave them something great and self-transcending to live for, and spurred them to courage and discipline and effort. One who reads the *Annals* of Plutarch sees there what splendid devotion this civic religion bred; one who hears of the Spartan lads, from their childhood living for the larger life of which they were a part—not only ready, if necessary, to die for their country, but undergoing a daily discipline and self-denial for her—can never speak of such examples of the pagan religion without reverence and a touch of wistful regret. Higher though the Christian religion is in most of its ideals, it has never yet evolved so intense a social consciousness as had flourished for a time in the ancient world.

This civic virtue had, however, disappeared through the operation of various forces, before Christianity began her triumphal march westward. And her conquest of the West was due, in part to the vigor of her faith, in large part also to the New Life which was linked with this Great Hope and its witness. Already the Kingdom of God was in a sense present,

in the hearts of the faithful, a redemption from the vanity and sin of the existing order. Instead of the exaltation of might, the pride of power, the wantonness of luxury, the new teaching enjoined patience, humility, purity, simplicity of life. The primitive church was an intimate brotherhood, caring for the poor and the weak in its membership, showing kindness to all, and rejoicing in its discovery of the glory of self-forgetting love and service. As the high idealism of the Prophets, some centuries before, had leavened Judaism, transforming it from a semi-barbarous cult into a religion whose dominant note was the vigorous pursuit of personal and national righteousness, so that religion, sweetened and further spiritualized by Jesus, now began to leaven the pagan world. It could not retain its original fervor and purity — religious progress comes in waves, with long troughs between the crests — but it has been the greatest power in the world since that day for the moralization of man.

It would be easy to analyze these recurrent waves of reform within the church, and note how generally the moral note was predominant. St. Francis, Luther, Wesley, Channing — the great leaders that have swayed Christian thought have been men of deeper moral insight than their contemporaries, men who have called their fellows to a better life, and rejected current doctrines not so often for their inconsonance with fact as for their relative immorality. The Protestant Reformation, for example, was primarily a moral protest, and the Unitarian movement in America largely a revulsion from the immoral conception of God taught by the then current Calvinism. If space allowed, it would be profitable to point out how such concepts as "sacrifice" and "sin" have de-

veloped from non-moral beginnings a significance so deeply moral that we have almost forgotten their original meaning. On the whole, and in spite of eddies in the current, it is clear that, other things being equal, the religions, and the types of a given religion, which tend to win the day are those of higher moral vision.

The reasonableness of a religion — the third of our survival-causes — has counted for much less historically. The protests of cultivated Greeks, to whom the gospel was naturally “foolishness” — a *βάρβαρον δόγμα* — availed naught against the inspiring and consoling values of the new faith. And although Christian doctors have never ceased, from the outset, to justify their beliefs to the intellect with ever-varying and often elaborately ingenious logic, the historian perceives that the faith was primary and the reasoning secondary. The most grotesque and, one would suppose, obviously irrational dogmas never lacked intellectual backing, and scarcely suffered from their remoteness from the realm of observed fact. Reason is the latest developed of man’s powers; and except for a brief brilliant period in Greece, and now in quite recent times, the irrationality of a belief has been a hardly appreciable handicap.

The rationality of a religion is rapidly becoming, however, of decisive importance. The scientific temper that demands evidence for proffered beliefs is infecting our biblical studies and our theological discussions. And just as among the later Greeks and Romans the old religions, with all their poetry and social value, crumbled before the merciless analysis of a rising intellectual temper, so to-day the traditional dogmas of Christianity are being subjected to the criticism of an impartial and cautious logic. We

are prone to forget how recent this scientific attitude toward religion is, in any widespread degree. Bishop Butler threw a bombshell when he declared that "reason is the only faculty with which we have to judge concerning anything, even revelation itself." And Channing, less than a hundred years ago, shocked the pious by his attitude toward the faith, expressed in such statements as, "If religion be the shipwreck of understanding, we cannot keep too far from it," or, "If I could not be a Christian without ceasing to be rational, I should not hesitate as to my choice."

This scientific spirit, with its insistent demand for evidence, is diminishing the power which the brightness of a religion's faith has to insure its spread, while it increases the survival-value of its consonance with observed fact. To be sure, as the influence of William James' will-to-believe doctrine shows, or the popularity of Bergson's philosophy with a public who comprehend little more than its vaguely optimistic purport, any faith that promises much and assures discouraged hearts of what they would fain believe will always have an enormous advantage in the competition of cults. But the opposition of the Protestant churches to the critical spirit is rapidly diminishing; and the ultimate goal of Protestantism seems to be the complete rationalization of its beliefs, a whole-hearted acceptance of science as the arbiter of truth, and the formulation of its insights and ideals in terms that science can accept. The promise of that eventual outcome is present in that individual liberty of belief whose seeds were contained in the Reformation. Meanwhile, all sorts of influences within the Church are at work to raise the level of her moral teaching and restore her original idealism. Especially noteworthy in the last few years is the

movement toward a reincorporation in Christian teaching of the old ideals of civic righteousness, once preached so memorably by the Hebrew prophets but long since lapsed from the consciousness of their spiritual heirs.

It seems safe, then, to predict that whatever currents and cross-currents may affect religious evolution in the future, the eventual outcome is pretty sure to be the dominance of that religion which most successfully combines the three desiderata — first, optimism, faith, a happy and confident forward look; secondly, high moral-spiritual ideals, a passionate pursuit of righteousness; and, thirdly, consonance with the teachings and spirit of science. A half-blind and mechanical process of natural selection drives in that direction. So, although our conscious efforts can vastly accelerate the process, we need not despair when they seem for the moment futile. The mills of God grind slowly; but that they have long been and are still at work, grinding the wheat from the chaff, in religion as in everything else, a survey of religious history quite clearly shows.

CHAPTER TEN

WHAT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION MIGHT BE

It is doubtful if there ever was a time when the Christian church gave so great effort to spread its gospel as in these latter years. Yet interest in religion has been, on the whole, quite evidently declining; our generation has been drifting steadily away from professed Christianity. On this continent the situation has been complicated by the difficulty of getting hold of the immigrants, who have broken loose from old ties. A majority of them suffer a sea change when they leave the Old World, lose the faith of their fathers, and get no formulated religion to take its place. A typical result is that in New York City at present over half of the population of Protestant antecedents, over half of Catholic antecedents, and three quarters of the Jews are "unchurched,"—have no institutional connection with religion. Besides this, great numbers of those who are nominally connected with some church actually stay away from it, or might as well for all the benefit that accrues to their religious life. In the country the tenacity of custom and the pressure of public opinion make the statistics better. But many a rural church is no more than half alive. The situation everywhere is, for those who love religion, unquestionably serious.

For this decline of the churches there are several important reasons. One is to be found in the increasing richness of contemporary life, that has lured

men away from concentration of thought and will upon spiritual things. Another reason we have been discussing — the spread of the scientific spirit, that makes men increasingly impatient with unproven dogmas and the prescientific beliefs set forth in familiar creeds. A cause less commonly noted but which we must now consider, is the irrelevance and comparative futility of most of our modern attempts at the religious education of youth.

A great deal of money is being spent, and the devoted energy of multitudes of workers is being used, in what is currently called religious education. But most of this effort is tangential to religion, does not hit the bull's-eye; it does not affect the will, does not produce religious zeal or an appreciably awakened spiritual life. The trouble lies partly in a failure to understand education, to utilize methods appropriate to the end that is sought. But it lies still oftener in a failure to understand religion, to realize clearly what is the end that should, above all else, be sought.

The pathos of the situation lies in the fact that the Church is too often giving stones to those who hunger for bread. The hope of the situation lies in the equally undeniable fact that outside the churches there is to be seen a vital spirit of religion flaming in the souls of masses of men who have never enrolled under the banner of Christ and have no love for the Church. This truth, which is a matter of commonplace observation, has recently been given poignant expression in one of the noblest and most pathetic books which the Great War produced, Donald Hanky's *A Student in Arms*. Here was a young man, ardently Christian and deeply concerned for the spiritual life of his comrades, wrestling with the problem, until he cried out at last in exasperation,

"How seldom does 'Christian Education' teach one anything worth knowing about Christianity!" Hankey was killed in action, in October, 1916; and most of the men of whom he writes have paid, with him, the ultimate price,—leaving to us, who have been spared that sacrifice, a world to rebuild. Of all our tasks none is more important than that of making the age to come more deeply and pervasively Christian than the generation before the War.

A hundred writers have been telling us of the effects of the War upon religion or forecasting this result and that. Out of their confused and very diverse findings there emerges at least this one clear truth: great reserves of heroism and sacrifice and loyalty were called forth in millions of human hearts; and men who had been living for petty and personal ends came at last face to face with ultimate realities. The Church had not tapped these resources.

While the War lasted the ardor of patriotism to a large extent acted as a substitute for religion, taking men out of themselves, giving them something noble and beautiful for which to live and labor and die. But this fever-heat has not long outlasted the War; there has been a slump to lower levels, now that the excitement is over and only the dreary tasks of reconstruction remain. Moreover, patriotism, for all its ability to exalt a commonplace life, to wring from it coöperative effort and self-transcendence, is a dangerous stimulant, easily degenerating into jingoism, chauvinism, pride of conquest, hatred of enemy-nations, unless it is illuminated and spiritualized by a vision that covets for the fatherland true excellence and not mere material aggrandizement. In short, whether national patriotism is to be a force predominantly for good or for ill depends upon whether men

have come to care for the things that are just and pure and lovely and of good report, depends upon the success of their religious education.

Is the Church seriously facing this great opportunity? It is not enough to say that we are going to have a new world as a result of the War; we must *make* that new world. Of the weapons that lie to our hands, there are three whose potentialities must be more and more utilized — legislation, art, and education.

Legislation has been extending its sphere with a rapidity that could hardly have been imagined a generation ago; and this new willingness to submit our wilful individualities to social control, to subordinate ourselves to all sorts of organized efforts and common restraints, has undoubtedly come to stay. The older hit-or-miss, devil-take-the-hindmost individualism is vanishing forever,—and good riddance. But while legislation can banish alcohol, stop child-labor, and rein in profiteers, and in many another way bring us nearer the Kingdom of God, there is one thing surely that it cannot do — it cannot make men religious.

Art is a power that we have hardly yet learned to harness. Here are floods of emotion going to waste over novels and short stories, at the theatre, at concerts, at the movies,—going to waste in that they produce no appreciable changes in conduct. The emotional life that in the Middle Ages was largely concentrated on religion is now so constantly tapped by these secular stimuli that it is difficult to stir its depths by the comparatively wan and tedious services of the Church. Many of the most earnest men and women of to-day turn for inspiration to the dramatist, the poet, the essayist, rather than to the preacher. And with this we should have no quarrel if the in-

spiration caught from the artist were enough for the guiding and stabilizing of life. But these moments of quickened emotion, these vicarious heroisms and loves, pass quickly away and are forgotten, instead of being wrought into the substance of life. We need patient week-by-week labor, directed by the vision of a clearly seen goal, to mould the spirits of plastic youth into a victorious and lasting idealism. The random and evanescent influences of art need to be utilized and supplemented by a deliberate process of education.

It is not abstractly necessary that the educator should be the Church, or that the idealism with which we seek to stamp the souls of youth should be called Christianity. But actually our public schools are almost helpless in this matter, home education is too haphazard to be relied on, and no other institution has the resources and the will to carry on the work. Moreover, while this passion for righteousness, this devotion of heart and will to the disinterested service of ideals, under any name would be as sweet, a concrete name of some sort, a common rallying-cry, is as necessary to it as a nation's name and flag is to the passion of patriotism. And surely there is none whose name our spiritual ideal may more properly bear than that of the Galilean prophet through whose teaching and death there has come to the modern world — at least, the world of the West — far the greater part of the spirituality which it has possessed.

Education, then, the Christian education of youth, to a degree not yet attempted, is our great need, if the new age is to increase, or even to retain, the spiritual heritage of the past. The era of evangelism may indeed any day reappear; perhaps we can never afford to

do without the aid of cataclysmic conversions and periodic revivals. But we have learned that salvation comes normally through education; that must be our main reliance. Fortunately, in no field has there been more progress in the past decade.

Upon two points educators will agree: first, that the reason why education has accomplished no more than it has in the past is that we are as yet but tyros in the art; but secondly, that education, even such as we have given, has been of a potency which we hardly realize in moulding the minds of men. If we need an object lesson, see what the German ruling class did to their people through education. When in 1871 von Moltke entered Paris at the head of the victorious German army, he said, "It is the Prussian schoolmasters who must be given the credit for this." And for the generation succeeding they trained their youth to militaristic ideals, to unquestioning loyalty to the State, to a pride and confidence in the destiny of the German nation,—with the result that we know. The potentialities of education are as great for good as for harm; in the use of this powerful instrument the Church should not lag behind the Kaiser.

We are continually driven back, however, to the initial difficulty, that of winning church people to a clear conception of what education in religion *is*. When you hear it said of such-and-such a church that it has an excellent system of religious education, ask, What is it then that the youths are learning? Into what mould are their spirits being shaped? Our up-to-date churches have discarded the absurd catechisms of an older generation, and no longer foist upon their communicants the propositions of that stiff and humorless theology that was the spiritual milk of our fathers. But the so-called religious edu-

cation of to-day consists chiefly of bits of the history (or pseudo-history) and literature of the Jews. Now the Jews of Bible times — or rather their great prophets and poets and chroniclers — were of a singularly religious temper, so that to those who read deeply in the Bible and with understanding there are bound to come visions of profound and precious spiritual truths. The Bible is the great source-book for the study of the Hebraic spirit — as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are the source-books for the old heroic spirit of Greece. But source-books are not always the best tools of teaching; and the question is pertinent whether the Old Testament legends and chronicles, or even the Gospel incidents and the missionary journeys of Paul are the directest and most vital means of awakening or reinforcing the religious life of youth.

For one thing, the interest of the pupil in a Bible-class is primarily attracted, if attracted at all, to the historical episode; and when the moral is drawn it is apt, while accepted without question, to awaken little response. In the second place, those Jews were, after all, a provincial and undeveloped people; and their situations and problems, while really, of course, eternal in many of their aspects, are apt to seem remote and irrelevant to the youth of to-day. Most boys and girls are interested in contemporary problems, in live issues, in the question how they ought to act under such and such circumstances. And to try to awaken their interest in the religion of to-day through a study of the Psalms and sermons and anecdotes of the Jews of two thousand years ago is a curious pedagogical inversion. Of course it is clear why Bible teaching is universally accepted as the natural and almost the only form of religious education; it is an inheritance from the days when the

Bible was looked to as the unquestioned authority in morals. But to-day the burden of proof should be seen to rest upon those who insist that Christian education must be carried on exclusively or even primarily through the Bible.

It comes down, of course, to a question of what Christianity *is*. If it is, as we have said, essentially a Way of Life, then for the love of your children, for the hope of the future of the world, get down to business; teach the children that Way of Life. Make it simple, make it clear, make it direct, apply it to their actual problems of to-day and to-morrow. Let every boy know clearly what he must do differently if he enrolls himself a Christian. If he is a normal boy and is approached in the right way he will *love* to enlist in the Christian army, he will have a real sense of what it means to sing "Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war"—to war with unkindness, and impurity, and laziness, and sulking, and ill-temper, and the other enemies which he well knows and to which he can be made heartily ashamed to yield.

This means rescuing the boy's religion from mere church associations and making it an integral aspect of his daily life. Religion for many men and women, as well as for children, is a sort of intermittent dream, something that wells up in us under the peculiar spell of organ music and pulpit elocution—and disappears in the cold light of Monday morning. Especially to the healthy boy it appeals as rather goody-goody—if not as sheer discomfort. But let the boy realize that life itself is an art, and an art in which skill is learned by precious few, he is at once naturally ambitious to learn it. To skate well, to swim, to play baseball, he will give endless

exertion; to succeed in life itself will more and more, as he grows older, awaken his interest. It is, first of all, a question of showing him what real success is — the sort of success that gives life lasting joy and power and the love of his comrades. Then he must be shown that it is not enough to *wish* to be good, or brave, or kind; he must learn *how* to be all this. Never quote to him that absurd Victorian counsel, "Be good, dear child, and let who will be clever." Show him that it *takes* cleverness, skill, experience, insight to *be* good. Goodness is an art to be studied all our lives, an art in which we shall at best none too well succeed — and in which we shall very likely not even *try* to succeed unless the Church, or a right-minded parent, or some other source of inspiration, awakens our zeal to succeed.

Happily, the Church is reawakening to the real purpose of its existence, turning back from the discussions of orthodox belief to the practical interests of apostolic times, trying to help people to solve their daily problems of conduct and to serve their neighbors. The last aspect of our church life to feel this wave of practicality is our religious education. Theological students still spend their precious years largely in studying ancient languages, and in listening to the ideas of Greek and Hebrew scholars about the exact date of composition or the accurate translation and exegesis of old Jewish laws and legends and of the hasty letters which an early Christian missionary wrote to his infant churches, instead of grappling by day and by night to understand the extremely complex moral problems of to-day and the needs and temptations and views of life of the men and women whose steps they are to presume to guide.

✓ The Church exists to show men what is their real

good, to point out to them how to avoid making a mess of their lives, to inculcate in them the spirit of service, and to teach them in patient detail how wisely to serve. This is not a mere matter of enlightenment, it is largely, as we have said, a matter of training the will — a thing that we have hardly begun to do. How is a boy, when he meets his first great unexpected, half-understood sex-temptation, to resist? There is a problem for you! Religion is a matter of just such big, daily, real problems. We speak of applied Christianity,—all Christianity worth the name is applied Christianity, great eternal spiritual principles applied to the difficult business of living.

Certainly it is a valuable thing that our boys and girls should be taught an accurate historical account of the origins of our religion. Unhappily, the account given of these origins, and especially of the life and character of Jesus, by most Christian churches is naïvely *unhistorical*. This embroidery of miracles, this acceptance at their face value of the biased and naïve chronicles of the Jewish and Christian writers is one of the baneful aspects of modern Bible teaching. But a real comprehension of the great spiritual hero whose name we bear, it is the duty of the Church to try to give; and in some measure an acquaintance with the prophets that went before, and the apostles that followed after.

Furthermore, religious teachers will continue to draw from the Bible, and from other ancient writings, illustrations and parables and texts for the duties they present to their pupils. But there is always the danger in this of a literal acceptance of the mythology of the Bible. How far religion must be mythological to be moving, how far the religious life

needs to be dramatized, as it is in the New Testament picture of the Judgment Day, or in the anthropomorphic God of the Old Testament, in order to grip the hearts of men, is a psychological question, the discussion of which would take us afar. There are many who feel that Christianity, to live at all, needs the literal acceptance of its mythology, and that openly to rationalize it would be to deal it its death blow.

Is not this too pessimistic? Is it really true that religion needs a cloak of illusion to appeal to men's hearts? Surely not! The character and teachings of Christ and of the prophets make their appeal, quite apart from the glamour of miracle and myth, to the hearts of men — even to the heart of childhood. The problem of how and when to disentangle the truth from the poetry in the myth and parable in the Bible is one which we must not here pause to discuss. It is merely worth while to allude to it to point out a danger that goes with Bible education. The main point is rather that Bible education at best is *but a means to religious education, not religious education itself*; and the end is often forgotten in attention to the means.

There are many other dangerous currents in the teaching of the Church that affect the efficacy of our religious education. There is the shallow optimism that says, "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world," instead of saying, "God is in our hearts, to *make* all right with the world." There is the comfortable preaching of the supernatural coming of the Kingdom of God, if we will be patient and wait for it, instead of the divinely *uncomfortable* preaching of the need of our getting out and *helping* the Kingdom of God to come. There is the spirit of bragging about our religion as the perfect religion and

the patronizing attitude toward the so-called heathen religions, in place of the humble eagerness to look for inspiration and ideas to other religions, and the resolve to *make* our religion the best in the world by incorporating whatever is helpful and uplifting in them all. There is the concern with merely individual salvation, which ignores the truth that we live a corporate life, and that the unrighteousness of our social order cannot be rectified by the saving of the souls of some of its members. There is the stupid sectarianism that insists upon the importance of utterly trivial beliefs, which, even if true, have little to do with the salvation of the individual or of society. These distortions of the true Christian spirit, and many others, we might discuss again here, for they poison and inhibit the teaching of that spirit to our youth. But we must return to emphasize what is of positive importance.

Christianity is the Way of love and loyalty, the Way that believes in lending a hand, in the square deal. Nineteen hundred years ago it meant stopping by the roadside to save a man who had fallen among thieves. A few years ago it meant working and economizing to send aid to the Belgians, and for many young men enlisting to cross the seas and *bring* aid to the Belgians. The word "love" sounds sentimental; the thing the word means is the strongest and bravest thing in the world and can be made to appeal enormously to our boys and girls.

Purity is a harder aspect of Christianity for youth to learn to love. But again, Christian purity is not an anæmic, negative thing; it is a great, glorious passion — the passion symbolized immortally by the cross. Purity is a simple thing; but, like many another simple thing, like keeping your temper, like lov-

ing unlovable people, it is hard. It is the hardest of all things for the young, or for many of them; and because it is, it is the supreme challenge to them, to which, if you can touch the right chord, they will respond as to a bugle call.

"God," "the Kingdom of God,"—the child will not clearly understand the meaning of these terms, but they can mean much to him. And they can mean more and more to us as we grow older, until the time comes, as it ought to come to us all, and would to most of us if we had ever had a real religious education, when they are the supreme words in our life — or at least when the realities which they stand for are the supreme realities in our life; when to serve God with body and mind and soul, and to work for the bringing in of the Kingdom of God, is our one aim in life, and our dearest joy.

Can religious education do this for common men? There is hardly a doubt that it can; for it has done *just* this in happier periods of the world's history. The early Christians went about pure and loyal, with God in their hearts, and hands outstretched to help their neighbors. They offered religious education to all they met, because religion was so infinitely precious to them. We have long ceased to talk much about it during the week; it is an old story, and we have many other interests. So we have nearly forgotten what it is. We think it is necessary to invest these simple truths with all sorts of wrappings of theology and to laboriously extract them from stories of long ago.

Mr. H. G. Wells, in his *Modern Utopia*, elaborates a conception which has appealed to many of his readers—that of the Samurai, a sort of voluntary nobility, men and women who live according to a Rule—

not a harsh Rule, but one that demands effort and unselfish service. Such a voluntary nobility is the band of Christians who seek to keep to the Rule given them by Christ. If we would concentrate our efforts seriously on training our boys and girls to loyalty to that code, using all the lessons that applied psychology and child-study are teaching us, we could so stamp it into their natures that, though they might lapse from it, the great majority would return to it and know themselves, in spite of the lure of senses and self, to be inescapably Christian in ultimate intent.

This process has three aspects, which, though more or less blended in practice, need separate attention, that none be unduly neglected.

First, there must be *enlightenment*. The preacher and the Sunday-school teachers must see to it that every regular attendant receives a clear and comprehensive notion of what the Christian ideals are, why they are important, and how they should be applied to the concrete personal and public moral problems of our daily life. Free discussion should be encouraged of the questions how a Christian should act under such or such circumstances. The blindness of well-meaning people to the evil consequences of some of their acts should be patiently but insistently pointed out, and examples of Christian living studied, that insight into the pitfalls and opportunities of life may grow more penetrating and profound. Books on spiritual living and on practical homely ethical problems should be available in the church library, and the minister should be adviser to his flock in matters of difficult decision which they may bring to him.

Secondly, there must be *commitment*. The Christian way of life must be definitely accepted by each member of the Church as *his* way. A profession of intent to live by the Christian code should be required of every one who seeks to join the Church — in place of the profession of belief (in matters about which the member can seldom have a well-founded judgment) so often required to-day. This pledge, in abbreviated form, might well be repeated at every church and Sunday-school service, as the Apostles' Creed (so-called) is now repeated in many churches. The members must never lose sight of the fact that what unites them is their common desire and their mutual pledge to follow, so far as in them lies, the path blazed by the Founder of their Church — the Way of sacrifice and service. The consciousness of their final commitment to this Way must be vivid enough to stay with them during the cares and distractions and temptations of the week.

Thirdly, there must be *reinforcement*. It is not enough to have seen what is right to do, and to have willed to do it. Our vision clouds and our wills falter. Every available stimulus must be utilized to keep the flame burning. The sermon should be a challenge to wandering thoughts, a call to wavering wills. The prayers and the hymns, the lesson read, the lives of heroes studied in the Sunday school, should all have practical value in rousing emotion and directing it into channels of conduct.

In a word, religious education consists of the training of the will to keep to a code — that code which in spite of our sectarian differences we agree to be the way Christ taught men to live. If Christianity be essentially the devotion of heart and will to a great

ideal of life, and if that ideal with its profound reflection of the deepest needs of human nature, and its instant appeal to the best in us, be drilled into us in concrete detail from childhood up, is there not a hope that Christendom may really be Christianized?

CHAPTER ELEVEN

SHALL CHURCHES HAVE CREEDS?

A SHARP test of our belief in freedom of thought and in religious education is offered by the question, Shall churches have creeds? Whether profession of belief in the creed is formally required of applicants for admission to the Church, or whether it simply stands as the implication of membership, the corollary of the pages that have preceded is plainly that a church-creed is pernicious. This is not to say that exact thinking, and the formulation of beliefs, is undesirable; on the contrary, each individual should be urged to think upon the matters with which the historic creeds are concerned, and to arrive eventually, if possible, at some conclusion, if only tentative and provisional, with regard to them. But what is wrong is that any such conclusions should be set up as the creed of the Church. The moment that happens, thought is petrified, those who cannot wholly acquiesce are made uncomfortable, if not unwelcome, and others who might else seek to enter the Church turn away.

Most Christian churches to-day are fairly hospitable, and accept for membership anybody of respectable character, with few questions asked. Nevertheless it remains true that in joining, a man is universally supposed to give tacit assent to certain theological and historical beliefs. In many churches the Apostles' Creed, so called, is recited weekly. Most have printed statements of belief which are pub-

lished as representing the convictions of the members. A frank statement of doubt, or of disbelief, is regarded as treason and as warranting the charge of hypocrisy if the member remains within the Church. The Church stands in the eyes of the world for such doctrines; and those who do not believe them stay for the most part outside, however much they acknowledge the value of her work, and however wistfully they may realize the inspiration her fellowship and counsel might give.

Our greatest political leader, Abraham Lincoln, was one of these. "I have never united myself to any church," he wrote, "because I have found difficulty in giving my consent without mental reservation to the . . . statements of Christian doctrine which characterized their articles of belief and confession of faith." Our greatest moralist, Emerson, resigned his office as Christian minister because he felt cramped even in the most liberal of our churches. Our greatest philosopher, William James, likewise felt constrained to remain an outsider. So Charles Eliot Norton, called "the first gentleman of America." And so hosts of other scarcely less distinguished men and women. One of the best-known and loved preachers of our generation, Dr. Lyman Abbott, telling of his boyhood, writes: "I coveted the spirit of life which I recognized in my grandfather, my father, my mother, and my aunt, who after my mother's death was a second mother to me. To get that life I thought I must understand and accept the creed of the church to which they all belonged, and for four or five years I studied, as I had opportunity, earnestly and with boyish thoroughness, that creed. I thought to find in it a gateway to Christ. Instead I found it a barbed-wire entanglement."

When we turn to the masses of common folk, we find millions who are to-day staying without the Church because they do not feel welcome and at home within her portals. Religious at heart many of them are, essentially Christian in spirit, hating sin and selfishness, personal impurity and social injustice, but repelled from the Church by her, sometimes unobtrusive but always real, barrier of theoretic dogmatism. For example, a recent writer in the *Nation* speaks of "the chain-gang conformity of church-membership. Religion to most of my acquaintances remains the synonym for a house of bondage. Once they outgrew the subordinations of youth they spontaneously, joyfully, cast religion aside." Is the maintenance of this dogmatic barrier worth the cost?

If not, what *shall* be required for admission to the Church? Surely there must be some bond of union, something for which its members openly stand. The contention of this volume is that the bond of union should be a covenant, a pledge to live in the Christian Way. Conduct, not creed, should be the test; not what a man believes, but what he does, not what he says or thinks, but what he is. Each individual may formulate his own creed, brief or elaborate. But the churches, as such, should frankly cease to be believers in certain creeds, not simply winking at the heresies of their more liberal members, but making it plain that there is no such thing as heresy for them, that a member is free to believe or disbelieve according as his own reason and experience lead him. The Church, that is, should put as her one requirement the wish and earnest endeavor to live the Christian life. Are you willing, she should ask, to enroll yourself publicly as a follower of Christ, to live the sort of life he taught, at whatever needful personal

sacrifice? If so, you have a perfect right to the name Christian and to the fellowship of the Church, whatever your doctrinal views may be.

The goal — complete intellectual freedom, but concerted action — is not to be reached merely by pruning and expurgating, revising and minimizing the creeds. A brief creed, a vague creed, a creed expressed in modern terms, will still exclude many who belong within the Church. Our Puritan forbears, who came to these shores for “freedom to worship God,” meant simply freedom to worship in their way, not freedom for every one else to worship in his way. And Roger Williams, for example, was as much a religious outcast in New England as he would have been in old England. So most of our contemporary “liberal” churches stand not so much for real freedom of thought as for a new set of views, simpler, perhaps, and less obviously irrational, but none the less impossible of acceptance for many. The liberal movement will not reach its logical consummation until the churches grow to be generous enough to admit without disapproval all varieties of opinion that are compatible with the Christian Way of life.

Why is this obvious ideal so slow of general acceptance? The reason lies partly in sheer inertia and the momentum of tradition, and partly in the passionate loyalty of church-members to what they believe to be true and know to be precious to them. Whatever their pet beliefs may be, they feel them to be an essential part of the faith, and look upon a Christianity that does not insist upon them as an enfeebled and degenerate religion. They would not tamper with the heritage that has been handed down to them and leave an emasculated Christianity for the future. To be true to the faith committed unto them is their duty

and their deep desire. They fear that a creedless Christianity would degenerate into a mere society for ethical culture or social service — excellent ends, but not inclusive of all that they mean by Christianity. There are specifically Christian experiences, there is a specifically Christian life, for the exposition and explanation of which the dogmas exist, and the realization of which by each generation is too vital a matter for us to relegate those dogmas to the background.

This position assumes the truth of the dogmas. And the first question to ask of these conservatives is, Can we really *know* them to be true? Christian beliefs have undergone so many changes, and are to-day so various, that a humbler attitude would seem more appropriate. Even if they are wholly and literally true, there are many Christians to whom they will continue to seem untrue or doubtful. Ought the majority to insist that the minority profess their beliefs or stay without the churches?

But an even more telling counter to the conservative position consists in pointing out that a profession of belief in these dogmas does not in the least ensure a realization of the spiritual truths which they enshrine. Nor does the deletion of the requirement of such profession debar any one from a full acceptance of the beliefs. It will still be perfectly proper for those who cherish any particular belief to convert whomsoever they can to it. No one who does believe will be asked to stop believing; no one who does not believe is to be discouraged from believing. The latter is to be invited within the Church; here he can be got at, and perhaps converted to the beliefs in question, far more readily than when he remained without. If the beliefs will stand the

test of open discussion, they can be far more effectively preached to the Church's own members than to those who stand without. Were the Church to make it plain that all belong to her who love, believe in, and are trying to live by the Christian Way of life, no matter how they describe and formulate it, or how imperfectly they understand it, these men and women would far oftener come to her for inspiration and comfort. In time, in the atmosphere of Christian traditions, they might ripen into a fuller religious experience. So it seems that the very end for which the conservatives are aiming would be better attained by reversing their methods.

As a matter of fact, the situation seems to be this, that these doctrines, once so throbbing with meaning, are now mere husks to the average Christian, retaining a vague halo of holiness, arousing a humble sense of reverence and allegiance, but almost meaningless in terms of life. It may even be questioned whether the creeds are not often veils between us and the insights they once crystallized; their antique language gives a semblance of unreality and remoteness to truths which, if they were to enter into our own experience, would be personally significant, burningly real, cataclysmic. To bow before a creed, which represents others' experience and insight, may be to choke off the development of one's own religious experience, to make religion a second-hand affair rather than a personal aspiration, struggle, and victory. Were it not better done to leave to the preacher the function of making real to his flock the insights that lie behind the creeds and of leading them on to the reënactment in their lives of the experiences that gave them birth? Should we not be actually fostering a deeper religious life if, instead of thrusting a stereotyped and half-

comprehended creed upon everyone, we were to let creeds become again — as they were in the greatest days of the Church — elastic, fluid, responsive to the insight of the individual soul? Would it not be better to run the risk of inaccuracy and crudity of expression in a man's professions for the sake of having those professions represent his own growing experience?

But supposing the conservatives to be right in saying that full freedom of belief within the Church would make for a certain loss. Suppose that the creed of a given church is absolutely true and ultimate, and that the relegating of it to the background would weaken belief therein; supposing, further, that the attainment of a full Christian experience is dependent upon the grasp of these truths — would even this justify us in insisting upon them? It is a pity that every man should not have the full-rounded Christian experience; but this is no time to stickle for spiritual completeness, when the very rudiments of the Christian life are thereby hid from many. While we haggle over salvation by faith, or the atonement, or perchance the proper way to baptize or govern the Church, the forces that make for sensuality and worldliness are busily at work. After all, however precious they are, the dogmas are of secondary importance; if they are stumbling-blocks in our brothers' way, keeping them from that conversance with Christianity which even without the dogmas could mean so much for their stimulus and consolation, they should be ruthlessly set aside. Efficiency always implies sacrifice; and we must offer our spiritual teaching in terms that all can accept, even if it is less than we would wish to give.

There is, however, another argument of the con-

servatives which needs comment, the argument that conduct is the fruit of belief — meaning that the proper way to produce a noble life is to teach correct opinions. In this idea there is some truth; certain beliefs naturally stimulate certain types of conduct, and a man's opinions are by no means unimportant. But the least observation would show that a noble character is by no manner of means the exclusive possession of the orthodox. Right living is far oftener and more easily attained through the contagion of example, or through the direct perception of its worth, than indirectly, as a corollary of one's world-view. Indeed, the desirability of the Christian life is much more obvious and generally admitted than the truth of Christian dogma. A man does not need a creed to supply him with motives for living in what is so evidently the best way. Does the youth need to understand the theory of morals to be led to love honor, chivalry, generosity? It is doubtful whether the study of theoretical ethics has ever had any appreciable bearing upon a man's allegiance to an ethical code. In nearly all matters, truths of practice are far surer and more convincing than truths of theory. And just as we do not need to teach the psychology of morality to the lad whom we wish to guide into the path of honor and integrity, just as we do not need to start a practical electrician upon the study of that utterly dubious realm, the theory of electricity, so we do not need to induct our tyro in Christianity into the mysteries of theology. Such a procedure inverts the natural sequence of interest and intelligibility. Certainly there is a reason why, behind every practical precept of morals and religion; the comprehension of these reasons is a legitimate aim for mature minds. But quite without such in-

sight, and usually prior to it, the practical ideals make their own appeal and prove themselves right in daily experience. The Christian Way is both logically and psychologically independent of all theology, and may be practised with passionate consecration by one who has no clear conviction with regard to any such matters, and even no interest therein.

Nor does experience corroborate the fear that fervor will fade when the full-blooded beliefs of the "orthodox" are relegated to the background. Such a fear has been expressed with regard to every one of the beliefs once common but now obsolescent. The fear of eternal torment for misconduct would seem to be the belief beyond all others of which the loss would lead to laxity. But though few Christians to-day seriously believe in Hell, in any literal sense, the general practice of virtue is at least as high as in the Middle Ages, when no one doubted its grim reality. There is motive enough for the normal man to be virtuous without the spur of any supernatural fears or hopes. And, on the other hand, the push of passion and the lure of pleasure do their work with orthodox and liberal alike, without relation to their differing world-conceptions, but only with relation to their differing temperaments and temptations, and the moralizing influences which have impinged upon each.

Finally, the conservatives are apt to say, This is the belief of this church; if you do not like it, go elsewhere; you have no right to be in a church whose tenets you do not hold. The answer to this is that in many places there is no other church-home within reach, or none at which a similar barrier is not imposed. To keep founding new churches as beliefs change is to divide energy, to waste resources, to

weaken the common Christian endeavor. The Church should be thought of as a great international institution, like the schools and the police, belonging to us all, and not the exclusive property of those who cling to the viewpoint of an older day. It is ours as well as theirs; we have as good a right in it as they. Few of the great reformers have deemed it necessary to leave the church of their youth, but have sought instead to leaven it with their new inspiration or new outlook. Such a melting-pot of varying convictions is a far healthier institution than one which refuses any light but the old light. And those of us who hope to see the Christian church again in the van of human thought are by no means willing to abandon it to those who would tie down this branch of it or that to a parochial and limited vision.

If the main arguments for the retention of church-creeds are thus answerable, let us see what positive advantages may be expected to follow their abolition.

The most striking advantage is that it will restore the right emphasis to Christianity. The Church has been so much afraid of "heresy," so little afraid of sin, that the world has largely mistaken its mission — if it has not mistaken it itself. It is indeed to our common shame — for these matters could be quickly mended if the general conscience of Christians were quickened — that men who have, for example, amassed fortunes by ruining competitors or paying starvation wages to employees should remain unrebuked in our midst, while other men, who would scorn to make money at such a cost, men of honor and principle, men of the true Christian spirit, should be practically kept out of the Church by their beliefs or lack of belief about matters of fact. Freedom from mammon-worship, and the spirit of brotherhood in business,

are by no means all of Christianity; but they are a far more essential aspect of it than assent to any doctrines. If we should substitute a covenant for a creed, a vow of allegiance to unselfish and pure living, of personal loyalty to Christ and his ideals of conduct, we should not only be doing something far more important than the winning of assent to any cosmological or historical beliefs, but we should be directly appealing to the very widespread hunger for goodness and indignation at evil and greatly increasing the prestige and importance of the Church in the eyes of the world.

Scarcely less important a result would follow in that we should cease alienating the intellectually scrupulous. Dogmatism has been the great vice of the Church, embittering against her men of the true scientific, the open-minded, non-partisan spirit, and arousing a perpetual distrust of her among those who feel that free thought is essential to progress. The utterances of the preacher will always be discounted by the world so long as he is known to be committed to certain conclusions, and a theology will always be received with suspicion which is artificially protected from criticism and alteration. It is bad enough in itself that we accept from immature converts a profession of belief in matters about which they cannot possibly judge — a belief which must be largely based on a lack of any ideas to the contrary. But when we find that we are repelling thousands of the more alert, who are not so ready to commit themselves to an assertion of belief in matters beyond their ken, it becomes a matter, not only of fine scrupulousness, but of serious practical importance.

An incidental gain of no small moment would be that alluded to in an earlier chapter, the attraction

to the ministry of a more alert and intellectually gifted set of men. The man of fineness and intellectual conscience dislikes intensely to put himself in a position where he will be practically bribed to profess just such and such beliefs and no others. Many ministers to-day are uncomfortable in the secret knowledge of their own heresy, many would be made uncomfortable were they to acknowledge their real convictions. That such a situation should be forced upon the spiritual leaders of the nation is as intolerable as it is unnecessary. Were these men free to speak out, they would not tear down the Christian structure; on the contrary, they would the better buttress it, for the weakness of the Church has been her clinging to indefensible positions. And they would breathe deeper, preach with a truer note, speak out of their hearts rather than in time-honored phrases.

Still another advantage lies in the possibility which only this attitude will open up of union among Christians. It is chimerical to hope that any one church can convince the others and win their acceptance of its distinctive doctrines. Union must come in another way. Differ as we do, and shall for any visible future, in creed, we agree in seeking to repeat the same universal Christian experience, we agree to common duties and common ideals, we agree in a common loyalty to Christ and a common zeal to work under his leadership for the bringing in of the Kingdom. We know that the coming of that Kingdom would be greatly hastened, and our personal Christian life vastly quickened, by a closer coöperation and the enthusiasm that a sense of union would bring. And yet we block the way to this consummation by internecine disagreements upon what is secondary. There is no essential reason why a great

body of men each of whom is free to formulate his own creed should not form one church, fired with a common hatred of sin, a common belief in and dedication to Christian living. Such a church could, and would, regenerate the world. And the true creed, whichever that may be, would win general acceptance much more rapidly than it ever will while each church has its particular creed which it feels a duty to support.

But the imperious reason for the letting-down of the creed barrier is that the men without need the Church and the Church has need of them. There are souls to be saved, there are millions who are spiritually starved. What right have we to offer them spiritual food only in terms which many of them cannot accept? Many such eager souls, finding one sort of barrier at the Methodist door, another at the Presbyterian door, and so down the line, end by putting their idealism and courage and energy into socialism or anarchism (witness, for example, the passionate idealism and soul-hunger in Giovannitti's poem "The Cage," in the June, 1914, *Atlantic*), or some other of the non-Christian movements which are pushing in so many different directions and scattering that human power which ought to be brought into one concerted movement for the uplift of humanity.

Very many, moreover, of those within the Church are half-hearted in their allegiance because of their uncertain or partial allegiance to the official creed. How largely the subordination of creeds would strengthen their allegiance and how far it would add to the membership of the churches, it is impossible to predict. Certainly many would, as now, stand without, or be but nominal Christians, simply because they are not ready to take up their cross and

follow Christ. The lure of the world and its illicit pleasures — the transitory sweetness of sense-indulgence, the pride of unscrupulous personal success — are a steady counter-agent to the Christian preaching of purity and service.

But that is no excuse for keeping out or alienating the loyalty of those for whom the barrier is intellectual. As Mr. Meredith Nicholson says, we "should not debate metaphysics through a barred wicket with men who need the spiritual or physical help of the Church." The Church ought to be the great brotherhood of those who are battling against evil, the universal director and organizer of the world's goodwill. In this long and not always winning battle it is a grave fault to let minor considerations weaken and divide the forces of good, the army of God. The times call for a large tolerance in unessentials.

"It is a very impracticable question," writes Mr. C. F. Dole, "to ask whether a man believes that Jesus was God. The worst men may believe this and tremble. They are no better for believing it. It is a vital question to ask any man: Do you believe in what the Good Samaritan did? And will you go and do likewise?"

Christianity once had and lost the opportunity of breaking down all barriers between men and ushering in a real human brotherhood. She broke down indeed the old barriers, but she erected new ones. It is not too late, however, for her to realize her opportunity. In so doing she will be returning to the spirit of Christ and the noblest of the prophets. Christ never demanded orthodoxy of belief; his invitation was "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden." The question he asked was: "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of?" — the cup

of self-renunciation. The test he pictured at the Judgment Day was that of practical service. His daily concern was not with right opinion but with right living and the coming of his Father's kingdom — the reign of righteousness and peace on earth. "By this shall men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

For some three hundred years Christianity set up no hard and fast requirement of "orthodoxy." The creed-barriers are largely the result of the spirit of St. Augustine. The spirit of the Reformation was, in part, a revolt against this creedal-yoke, and an insistence upon the right of individual judgment. But the Reformation was not fully conscious of its own ideal; and it remains for the twentieth, or some later, century, to carry it to its logical consummation.

Matters are mending, on the whole, rather rapidly. Heresy trials are becoming rarer, churches and theological schools are treating their creeds as venerable monuments of ancient faith, no longer binding. The time is surely coming when no creed-tests will be imposed on applicants for the ministry. They will be accepted and ordained not because of their theology but because of the earnestness of their spiritual life, the profundity of their moral insight, their power to kindle in other men the sacred flame. They must indeed be acquainted with the rational basis of religion and able to explain to the struggling and inquiring the truth about the Bible and the creeds; but above all they must know men and how to help them, they must be full of the love of men and the ability to lead them. What is wrong, fatally wrong, is that they should be bribed by the necessity of getting and keeping their positions to profess belief in anything whatsoever but the importance of living the religious life.

If they are suited by their moral qualities and their mental talents for spiritual instruction and leadership they must not be disqualified by their honesty or their unwillingness to tamper with such opinions as naturally form in their minds as they read and study and observe.

The following communication from a professor in one of our leading Episcopal theological schools, published in the *New York Times*, Oct. 28, 1906, is significant of the new current: "So far from being a league to maintain a theory, the Church is a permanent branch of society, changing like the State, but like the State ultimately indispensable. . . . The Church and the Pulpit exist, among other ends, for stimulus and leadership. We have never yet seen what the pulpit might become. From it the strongest thinkers about life might speak, and light and heat radiate together. Its leadership might be genuine, and sound a summons for the best young minds that had not been heard before. Shall, then, the public critics encourage the Christian bodies to narrow the aperture that admits to the ministry, so that before long no large mind can enter it, to steer away (if I may put it otherwise) from the midstream of national life to a stagnant back-water of their own? Or shall it encourage them to think that it is spiritual life and spiritual leading that matter, and that the broad facts that make these possible are the gist of the creeds? Which of these courses is the wiser, the more statesmanlike and more humane?"

Why should we not return to the valuations of Jesus? Why not make the Church the home of all those who hate evil and would learn to do well? Why not preach Christianity as it was originally preached, not as an aggregate of (to many) difficult beliefs, but

as an ideal of difficult practice; convinced that he who does the will of the Father shall know enough of the doctrine, and that, in any case, the doing of the will is more important? Why complicate what will always be a difficulty for the will with an unnecessary, and irrelevant, difficulty for the intellect? Why not sincerely repeat the prophets' invitation, which Christ made his: "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Why not frame the Church's invitation in those glorious words which are the last words of the Bible to us: "The Spirit and the Bride (that is, the Church) say Come! And let him that is athirst come! Whosoever will, let him come and drink of the water of life freely!"

CHAPTER TWELVE

SHALL WE UNITE THE CHURCHES?

It is the shame of Christians that instead of uniting in the endeavor after the spiritual life, they have divided on all sorts of speculative and trivial differences. Instead of teaching that righteousness and purity and love are all-important, and theoretical opinions or methods of organization of quite subsidiary account, they have formed a new sect for every petty divergence of belief and church-government. Instead of becoming a strong inclusive body of all those who hate sensuality and selfishness and sin, they have cast out of their fellowship those who would not bow before the historical and cosmological ideas of the dominant majority, have let ecclesiastical ambitions and rivalries split their forces, and so are now not One Church but a jostling crowd of hundreds of separate sects.

There is, to be sure, color and interest in the variety of churches; denominationalism has not been an unmitigated evil. It has stimulated discussion on religious matters, and a realization that the truth in regard to them is in dispute. This intellectual ferment is better than stagnation or subservience to authority; we do not want union at the price of mental slavery or a flabby acquiescence in tradition. A united church might be a menace to freedom of thought; a strong, centralized, ecclesiastical organization would easily become a tyranny. Free discussion

in the older days was only possible through separation from the mother-church. But if the new union is based upon a covenant and not a creed, the drawing together of churches should promote more discussion rather than choke it. At present each sect is pocketed, the thought of its members revolving within a narrow circle; let them flow together, and the opposing ideas, freely meeting, should produce thought of a higher caliber.

To some extent, the rivalry of the sects has stimulated a healthy ambition for growth and enterprise — just as the competitive system in industry has been a spur to efficiency. But just as industry gains greatly in productiveness through the pooling of interests, so the churches could do far more effective work by merging their efforts. There can be a wholesome rivalry between the individual churches, without the duplications and divisions of denominationalism. Sectarianism has done its work of stirring things up, the old crusts are broken; the fostering of the Christian life now needs systematic and scientific organization.

There will continue, no doubt, to be different tastes as to the forms of church-services; some will prefer a highly ritualistic and liturgical service, others a simpler and more spontaneous expression of religious feelings. In the cities, neighboring churches may well develop along different lines, to meet these varying tastes. In the country churches something of a compromise must be sought, with perhaps different degrees of formality on different occasions. But there is probably less difference in temperamental need than is often supposed; these likings and dislikings are mostly a matter of habit, rather than inherent. Even if not easily alterable in those whose

tastes are formed, they are readily cultivable in the younger generation. And since they are only means, and of no significance in themselves, we may safely leave it to each local church to work out such forms of worship as its members may happen to be able to agree upon.

The movement toward church-unity springs not from a mere dislike of heterogeneity, but from an irritation at waste of effort, at narrow parochialism and cliquiness, at the spectacle of a hundred little ineffective, dogmatic groups, where we ought to have breadth of vision and union of effort. It is essentially the passion to get ahead faster with the work which the Church exists to do. At present many towns and cities are wastefully overchurched; it is not uncommon to find a thousand people supporting, meagerly and with difficulty, five or six churches, with five or six shamelessly underpaid ministers,¹ five or six expensive and ugly church-buildings, used a few hours a week apiece, and contributing nothing in taxes to the community, and perhaps as many parsonages, a burden to their occupants to run on the salaries they receive. There is probably very little difference in the preaching; it is a matter of different labels, different denominational connections, and superficial differences in forms; what the various labels really meant to the founders of the sects is pretty completely forgotten by most of the members. Nothing really separates most of them but petty unreasoned prejudices and the chasms between social sets.

Here are a couple of instances from a recent periodical: "There is a little town in California with a population of 1,800 that has thirteen churches and

¹ The average salary of the ministers in the United States in 1919 was \$937.

twelve resident ministers living off the community, plus what they receive from Home Mission Boards. There is another town in the same State with a population of 50,000 that has fifty denominations represented among its churches. Some of these denominations have several churches in the town. Among the fifty denominations is a church called the 'Church of God.' They had a fight in this church and the offshoot from the original church called itself the 'True Church of God.' This church in turn had a fuss, and a third church was formed which assumed the name 'The Only True Church of God.' "

These are extreme instances, to be sure. But the recent survey made by the Interchurch movement disclosed many cases nearly as bad. In a Pennsylvania village of four hundred and fifty people there are six churches; six churches in a New England village of a hundred and fifty inhabitants. In another eastern township eighteen churches minister to a population of about a thousand. The fact is that in the smaller towns and villages and in the open country there are commonly not enough Christians of any one denomination to form a vigorous church; a working union of the sects — if nothing closer can be got — is the *sine qua non* of Christian efficiency.

The needless multiplication of churches means half-filled pews, half-hearted enthusiasms, a generally dreary and depressing atmosphere, in which it is difficult to cultivate an eager spirituality. It means provincialism and prejudice rampant, the initial vision that launched each sect long vanished, and each now living on a diet of half-understood formulas, in a backwater of its own, out of the main current of thought. It means division of forces, impaired prestige, diminished power to fight sin and wrong.

It means that there is no proper proportioning of church-facilities to population, so that while some communities boast of several church-edifices within sight of one another, many small communities have no place of worship whatsoever.

In Colorado in 1911, one hundred and thirty-three villages were found to be entirely without a Protestant church, over a hundred of them having no church of any sort. The Interchurch survey in 1919 disclosed similar conditions in many places throughout the country.

"In one Eastern State within a radius of six miles there are thirty-six town or country churches, and immediately to the side of this area there are two well populated townships, containing very good farming land, but in which there is only one church, no resident minister and over eleven hundred young people absolutely out of reach of any church or Sunday school. In the further West in one whole county of 22,000 inhabitants only half that number are within the range of church ministrations and only one-tenth of these are actually reached by the church. Areas, even as large as 1,000 square miles, containing hundreds of people are churchless. More than three-score industrial communities within three counties of an Eastern State, with an approximate population of 100,000, have no church, Protestant or Catholic."

This uneven distribution of church-facilities gives point to the remark of Dr. Earl Taylor:

"The great problem of the Protestant churches is not so much to get them together as to keep them apart — at least half a mile apart. Churches have a tendency to get in each other's way."

In spite, however, of this evident need, the obstacles in the way of church-union are very great. Most men

and women are tenacious in their convictions, however ill-founded; indeed, the more tenacious in proportion to the lack of clear thinking they have done—for much thinking is bound to breed respect for opposing ideas. They cling to their particular brand of theology with intense assurance, and to their denominational home with loyalty and pride. The only way to overcome this formidable obstacle is to show these obstinate sectarians that they can hold their views just as earnestly and openly in a big common church as in their separate corners. Some of the larger churches, notably the Anglican Church, include, as it is, communicants of very widely varying convictions and tastes. We do not need to think alike to be able to join together for the purposes that we have in common.

Most people, however, do not want to be disturbed in their familiar habits. They are not sufficiently persuaded of the need of change; they have no big motive for getting up out of their ruts. They feel uneasy when detached from their accustomed denominational name, their accustomed pew in a particular church, a particular minister and a particular form of service. Adjustment in these matters can only be made if the people concerned can be brought to feel the larger issues at stake.

Still more serious an obstacle is the momentum of the various denominational organizations, the personal ambitions and convictions of their officials, of the editors and publishers of denominational journals, and of the professors in denominational theological schools. These schools and periodicals keep sectarian loyalties alive, and bias students for the ministry so that they in turn perpetuate the parochialism of outlook. The remedy would seem to be

in mergers, in inter-denominational schools and journals, and in a broader education for the ministry.

These sectarian prejudices would be impossible if the cliques that control the churches had a broader and more accurate knowledge of history. Such an outlook would engender a humbler attitude, revealing the fact, for example, that no one really knows what the original form of Christian baptism was; or that it is really very doubtful if there was an unbroken episcopal line handing down the headship of the Church from earliest times; or that the doctrine of the Trinity, for example, was a late and rather haphazard growth, a compromise or adjustment effected, as laws are formulated, through the clash of opposing argument, with much prejudice, much heat, a much less accurate knowledge of the life and teachings of Christ than we have to-day, and very little of what Matthew Arnold used to call "sweet reasonableness." This does not imply that the dogma of the Trinity may not embody a profound truth, or that the Baptists may not be correct in their belief as to the original form of baptism, or the Episcopalians in their conception of the Apostolic Succession. It only shows that all these doctrines, and the others which separate the sects, being matters upon which there is very meager and conflicting evidence, ought to be very tentatively held, with generous recognition of the right of contrary judgment, and an earnest recognition of the fact that they do not practically matter. Men are not saved by correct belief, or damned for incorrect belief, with regard to such matters as baptism or the episcopate or the Trinity — as the great majority prove that they realize through the readiness with which they transfer their membership from

one sect to another upon marriage, or a change of residence.

Certainly these sectarian prejudices would be impossible if people generally had the passion for getting the greatest possible amount of service done. You don't quarrel over theology when you are at war and the battle is on! The essential thing is to spread the conception of Christianity as a crusade — a war to the death against sin and wrong; when we are absorbed in that campaign — our whole heart in the Master's business, we shall have no patience with anything that weakens our forces or keeps us apart. Just as the American colonies had to unite to win their independence, just as the Allies had to merge their commands in the recent war, so the churches must unite in the far greater and longer war which they exist to wage.

We shall never unite on theology, that is clear. We ought not to unite on theology, lest we petrify thought and cramp its progress. We do not need to unite on theology, for differences in theology are compatible with a common platform — a common program of duties. The hope for union lies now, not as it did for so long, in repressing variations, but in making them non-essential. It lies in the possibility of an awakened realization of what a Church, united in its hatred of evil, could accomplish — in a passion for the speedy coming of the Kingdom of God.

Happily, practical interests are driving us in this direction — the higher cost of living, which is making it impossible to support so many ministers, the increased cost of maintaining and heating church-buildings, and the growing spirit of organization and economy in business, which cannot fail to influence ecclesiastical policy. But especially the war, by

putting men of all creeds shoulder to shoulder in a common enterprise, has made sectarian differences seem as insignificant as they are. And the absence of so many pastors at the front has forced many congregations to meet together temporarily, and taught them thereby that differences in tradition do not prevent common work and worship.

Just what do we mean, now, when we speak of Christian unity? There are two possibilities. One is that the denominations shall be kept, and joined in a practical working union, mapping out and dividing up unoccupied territory, cancelling all needless churches, and working together for social service, missions and educational effort. On this plan every one would join the nearest church, of whatever denomination it might be, and the smaller communities would have but one community-church, here of one denomination and there of another. Such a working arrangement would quickly make denominational differences meaningless, and might eventually result in a completer union.

The other possibility is that in each overchurched community the congregations unite to form a multi-denominational or an undenominational church. This has the advantage that, for example, Episcopalians are not obliged to attend a Congregational church, or *vice versa*; by a general surrender of labels no one will feel himself an alien in the common church-home. Especially the great masses of the "unchurched," who usually distrust denominational labels and particularisms, are more likely to be attracted, and the church more likely to be actually as well as in theory a genuine reflection of the religious life of the whole community.

The objection is often raised to these "union

churches," that the lack of outside supervision, of a central organization to lean upon for advice and help, is a serious drawback. They have not a regular ministerial supply to draw upon. They are less likely to interest themselves in missionary work outside the immediate community. They are apt to develop discords through lack of overhead supervision. But all of these difficulties could be remedied by a centralized organization of undenominational churches. If the churches were taken away entirely from sectarian control and run as the schools are, by the community, as a public concern too important to be left to private interests, we might perhaps see a renaissance of religion parallel to the development of education since that great field of human activity passed into the hands of the public. The union of Church and State was dangerous so long as the Church was autocratic and dogmatic; make it democratic, a federation of free local organizations; make it undogmatic, a place where thought may be free and fearless; and we may again let it become an institution belonging to the community as a whole.

Whatever the exact plan of union, or federation, its consummation is apparently going to be a slow development. The leaders of thought, the spiritual seers, are for the most part eager for it; but the majority of church-members, and usually the "pillars" of the churches, the little groups that manage matters, are wedded to the present chaos. We must have patience, tact, good-temper; we must be opportunists, glad to take any step that seems immediately useful in any place, and willing to tolerate confusion for a long time yet. But eventually, as Dr. J. E. McAfee has declared,¹ "Religion, like every other universal

¹ In an article in the *New Republic* for January 18, 1919.

human concern, must be brought under community control if democracy is fully to vindicate itself."

The centripetal forces are already prevailing over the centrifugal. Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists are harmonizing their factions. Some of the smaller denominations are dying out. The increasing realization of the crisis in the Church will work for further unification. But it is essential to stir the imagination and rouse the faith of the multitude of church-people; a successful union cannot be engineered from above; it can only be reached through a great popular desire. We must preach unceasingly that what matters is not whether one is Episcopalian or Methodist or Unitarian, but whether one hates evil and is eager to learn to do well; not whether a church practises baptism by immersion or by pouring or by sprinkling, but whether it stands for righteousness, and works with eagerness and consecration for its prevailing. If that scale of values is kept in mind, we shall, slowly but surely, approach the day when we shall be so conscious of our essential unity that we shall come together, at last, as one flock, one Shepherd — the great universal Church of Christ.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

IS MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE DESIRABLE?

THERE can be no serious doubt of the desirability of uniting all Christians into one Church on the basis of the endeavor to realize the Christian ideal of life. A more difficult question arises, however, with regard to the non-Christian churches. Should we look forward to fraternizing with them, as coequal members in a spiritual union wider than Christianity, or should we undertake to convert as many as possible of them to our Church, and hope for the eventual "evangelization" of the world?

Before we can intelligently discuss this problem, we must get away from the older conception that Christianity is the one divine, God-given, ultimate religion, whereas the other religions are man-made impostures, deserving of no sympathy or recognition. True believers *vs.* heathen, saved *vs.* lost — all the arrogant, patronizing, complacent superiority that those words imply must be stamped out, and replaced by a genuine recognition of the brotherhood of all men. All religions are man-made, all are imperfect, all, if judged by their intent, have something of the divine in them, all, if judged by the practice of their disciples, have a great deal that is evil. We may well deem our own religion best, as we deem our own country best. But just as patriotism does not rightly preclude a recognition of the worth of other countries than our own, so religious loyalty should not imply

a blindness to the significance and the insights of other faiths.

The first prerequisite of missionarying — if there is to be missionarying — should be a *sympathetic* understanding of the indigenous religions of the land to be visited. In a time when Protestant Christians rather generally look down upon Catholics, and Episcopalian Protestants upon Unitarian Protestants, it is a good deal to expect a Christian to feel any genuine sympathy with Buddhism or Mohammedanism. The dogmas and practices of alien religions seem as uncouth as their manners and customs. We forget that it is largely a matter of bringing-up — that our creeds and rituals seem as barbaric and irrational to them — and with about as good a right! We forget that their ideals are such as we might have shared if we had had their racial experiences and hopes — just as they forget, when scrutinizing the strange phrases of our creeds, that just such a garment might have been woven for their own thought if they had lived in the days and under the stresses of the men who devised these formulæ.

We must plainly recognize, for one thing, that most religious beliefs are not literally, but only practically, true. That is, the statements which men are asked to accept, while not literally exact, yet enshrine a genuine insight, convey a useful message. This holds of many formulas besides those of religion. For example, when we read in the Declaration of Independence that “all men are created equal,” we cannot take that literally; we are born very unequal in talents, in physique, in good looks, as well as in opportunity. The phrase, however, has been cherished by generations of Americans because it pithily expresses the truth that all men ought to have, as nearly as possible,

equality of opportunity, and to be equal before the law.

Many illustrations might be drawn from the Bible. For example, when Jesus says, "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you," his assertions sound like a promise, and have been quite generally so construed. Common sense points out that many who ask do not receive, many who seek do not find. And yet the saying is not thereby discredited; for it was by no means a mere exaggeration, whose exacter rendition would read, "To some who ask shall it be given, etc." No, what the saying conveys is rather the truth that the way to find is to seek; nothing is to be won unless one bestirs oneself to attain it. It is parallel to the common proverb, "Where there's a will there's a way." Literally, that is untrue; in many cases where there is a will, there is no way. But this proverb, like the Gospel saying, is not to be dismissed as a statement of probability — it is, as a matter of fact, not a probability, not literally true even in a majority of cases. Still less is it merely a statement of what sometimes happens; such a statement would have no hortatory value. It is rather a veiled but highly effective way of conveying the important lesson that it takes determination to succeed. "If you would find a way, you must have the will to find it." "If you wish a door opened you must knock."

Now the point to notice is that the effectiveness of these elliptical sayings would be seriously impaired by such an alteration of phraseology as would make them literally true and unambiguous. It is, therefore, not desirable, from the point of view of emotional value, to replace them by the exacter statements. Clearness of thought is not the greatest good;

and it is generally wise to suffer the ambiguity, and the misapprehensions of those who stand outside, rather than to lessen the power which the ambiguous utterances contain.

Take, for example, the oft-reiterated doctrine of Christian Science—"There is no evil!" To the rest of mankind this is the sheerest nonsense. And yet, watch the illumination that comes to the convert, see what a new and profound insight into human life he has discovered; see the effects in his actually transformed consciousness. For him there is no more evil forthwith. This refers, of course, to those who really grasp the secret; that they do possess a great secret we can not deny, or deny only because we have not personally seen the transformation wrought. So far as practical truth goes, they are right and the scoffers wrong. The present writer has elsewhere phrased that truth thus: "Evils must not exist for us, must not find a place in our world. Whatever is not good or beautiful or pleasant is to be counted out, thrown overboard, forgotten; is to be as if it were not. Just as when we adopt any ideal we cease to compute and calculate, but throw ourselves whole-heartedly on that side, so in our emotional reaction upon life we are to have eyes only for the good and refuse to see anything else. It is treating the world as we ought to treat our wives and mothers and dearest friends; it is our world, we love it and are loyal to it, for us it shall have no faults."¹ There is no illusion mingled with this statement. But it is doubtful if any one would ever be led to solve his personal problem of evil by reading these words. Tens of thousands have been led to do so by reading Mrs. Eddy's words. And the reason lies not merely in the illusion fostered by

¹ *Problems of Religion*, p. 210.

taking her words literally — there are some Christian Scientists at least who have little illusion about it — but also, to some extent, in the suggestive power of her literally untrue statements which is lacking in the more sophisticated phraseology. Unfortunate as, for our clearness of thinking, it may be, it seems true that we need the paradoxical form of assertion.

Similarly, the doctrine of Salvation by Faith, as expressed by Luther, or Wesley, or in the traditional Christian creeds, sounds like a piece of theological speculation which the intellectually scrupulous should hasten to disavow. Yet to reject it would mean to discountenance a method of saving men from sin which has been, and may still be, of enormous efficacy. We might explain the psychology of the process somewhat as follows: "The unhappy sinner, in many cases, has the power to live aright locked up in his heart, but unable to get control of him because it is blocked by the realization of his sinfulness; the formation of new habits is interfered with by his very concentration of thought upon his previous failures. Suddenly he is told that he need not think of his temptations any longer, that he has but to let go, yield himself up to Christ, or to God, and he will be saved. The suggestion of the possession of power is potent enough to make the power actually sufficient. The mind is fixed upon the goal instead of upon the obstacles, is freed from the demoralization that comes from a remembrance of past weakness, and lives in the atmosphere of attainment."¹ This highly important truth is contained in the Pauline doctrine; Paul himself was actually so saved from his life of restlessness and moral failure. And so, however fantastic, literally taken, the dogma of Justification by

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

Faith may seem, we must confess it to be a very useful means of preserving and revealing to men a great practical truth which without it might have been lost to Christian experience for centuries.

These illustrations might be indefinitely multiplied. Almost every sect and school has stood champion for some practical truth, for some truth which it has found to be significant, and whose denial would mean a vital loss. It has phrased this truth in language which was not literally true. The literal untruth of statement has aroused the antagonism of the other sects and schools that have not been on the inside, seen into the real practical meaning of the doctrine, or felt its power. Most of the objections to Christian dogmas have been proper, if the dogmas are to be taken literally. But on the other hand, most of those dogmas have been right, and important, and precious, if we look to the practical truth which they enshrine.

Indeed, the whole orthodox scheme is, after all, but a set of symbols of moral and inward truths. Much that is deepest and most sacred in the spiritual life of the race has clothed itself in this language, so that if that were taken away it would scarcely know how else to embody itself, and would in no small degree perish from lack of an adequate medium of expression. All religious ideas have to clothe themselves in the concepts of a particular time and place; orthodox Christianity took up the language of the first three Christian centuries in the Greek and Latin lands. Its meaning, its emotional values, reveal themselves to us who grow up under the ministrations of the Church. But to outsiders, to Mohammedans and Jews and Buddhists and Confucians, it seems merely fantastic, irrational, and quite obviously untrue.

Now if this is true of Christianity, in its traditional expressions, it is equally true of the alien religions. To us, without special initiation, they are bound to seem crude and meaningless and false. Every religion has had its term — Gentiles, barbarians, heathen — to indicate the followers of all the others. And yet each of these religions, when seen from the inside, will be found to be throbbing with significance, and potent in moulding the lives of its adherents.

“Which has not taught weak wills how much they can.
Which has not fall’n on the dry heart like rain.
Which has not cried to sunk, self-weary man:
Thou must be born again!”

Emerson was right when he said, “The religions we now call false were once true.” And are still true to those who grow up in them, although to the rest of us, who see only their verbal formulations, empty of their soul of meaning, they are quite palpable untruths.

What we need, then, is, first of all, to learn to *understand* these non-Christian religions, to see them through the eyes of their converts; not to compare their superstitious side with the best side of our religion, but, in all fairness, to take them at their best, as we wish our faith taken at its best. This is a very different attitude from that usually taken by missionaries. They commonly point out to us a few glaring evils countenanced or fostered by the religion — the status of women in Mohammedan countries, the needless self-sacrifice of young widows in India. As if we were not the scandal of mankind for our lynchings, and our drunkenness, and our slums! Mohammedanism has fought the curse of alcoholism

far more successfully than we;¹ Buddhism has removed the predacious and militaristic impulses from men far more successfully than Christianity. Why not see the best in all these faiths and seek to incorporate it in our own, instead of spending all our efforts in attempts to stamp out all that is sacred to them and to replace their ideals and loyalties by our own?

Christian humility has almost always been coupled with a fierce, if unconscious, opiniativeness and pride. If Christianity is ever to deserve to conquer the world, it will only be by giving up its cocksureness, its sense of having all the wisdom on its side, by holding out a hand of fellowship to these others and prevailing over them by its greater reasonableness and its wider sympathy. Instead of seeing the motes in its neighbors' eyes, it should be removing the beams from its own.

Take, for example, such a book as Henry Fielding-Hall's *The Soul of a People*. Here was a man who lived among the Burmese Buddhists until he came to love them, and to love the faith that inspired them. It is difficult to see how any one could read the pages of this book without feeling that, in many ways, their religion is the blood-brother of our own; and if you know the history of Buddhism, you know that it has kept free from some of the worst faults of the Christian Church. Buddha taught the doctrine of the Brotherhood of Man and the law of Universal Love five or six hundred years before Christ; and there are many close parallels between the Buddhistic and the Christian sayings. Buddhism has been far less opti-

¹ This was written before the Prohibition Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. It still applies to Christian Europe and the other American nations.

mistic, less virile, less militant, less imbued with the spirit of active service; but it has had the merits of its defects — it has had little intolerance, no inquisitions, no persecutions, no bloody crusades.

What then? Ought we to try to supplant such a religion by our own? The missionaries can point to thousands of converts who are far happier and more moral than they were before they found the Christian gospel. But to offset that, there is the side of which the missionaries seldom tell, and which few of them perhaps realize — the anguish of heart that comes from breaking old ties, and the sadness of friends and relatives who see their loved ones drawn off into what is to them an alien fold. Robert Louis Stevenson, writing once to a prospective missionary, said: "Remember that you cannot change ancestral feelings of right and wrong without what is practically soul-murder. Barbarous as the customs may seem, always hear them with patience, always judge them with gentleness, always find in them some seed of good, see that you always develop them; remember that all you can do is to civilize the man in the line of his own civilization, such as it is."

Surely the name "Christian" is not important, or the expansion of any particular church. What is important is the spiritual development of mankind. It is a question of psychology: which is the more effective way to spiritualize the lives of the non-Christian peoples — to convert them to our religion or to leaven their own religion with new spirituality and insight, and make the transition without breaking continuity? The problem is much the same as that which confronts us when, in impatience at the irrationalities and unspirituality of contemporary Christian churches, we wonder whether we had better abandon

them for a new and more ideal organization, or whether we should endeavor to make the existing churches the vehicle of our new insights and ideals.

No doubt the answer will be different in different cases. It is good for a church to be a missionary church, in some sense. But the sense may be that of giving to other peoples our ideals, and leaving it to them to work these ideals up into forms suitable to their national character and culture. Surely it is Prussianism in religion to attempt to stamp our religious culture upon them, instead of helping them to develop their own. Some of these non-Christian religions are very much alive and even aggressive, trying to regain the losses they have suffered through Christian propaganda. It is becoming less and less easy to convert the more awakened Asiatic peoples to our faith. Certainly much of Christianity — all that is essential in it — can be accepted by these other religions, or by some, at least, of them without abandonment of their allegiance to their inherited faith. Wherever, as in many places at present, a great deal of effort and money is being spent in fruitless efforts at changing the allegiance of these peoples, it may well be better to work with them, and to help them, while preserving their name and traditions, to incorporate what we have to offer that is precious and true.

More and more missionaries are going in something like this spirit — not as if they had the whole truth, and were to preach to men wandering in outer darkness, but eager to coöperate with whatever currents of spiritual life they can find, and instead of antagonizing the resident religious organizations, to breathe into them the spirit of the Christian Gospel.

There are, of course, religions that are not worth

saving, religions that are decaying, or are hopelessly cruel, irrational, or unfruitful. There are great masses of foreigners, as there are masses of Americans, who have no religion worthy the name. In many such cases the founding and fostering of Christian churches is clearly the best thing that could be done. But even here, it is necessary to guard against the imposing upon these ignorant men and women dogmas which will inevitably be almost meaningless to them, or dogmas which are rapidly becoming obsolescent in our own land. Far too much of missionary effort has been spent in teaching the mentally helpless savage supposed truths which he or his descendants must, very likely in agony of spirit, unlearn. It gives a shock to go to foreign lands and find Chinese, Hindoos, African negroes, wrangling over theological disputes which our forefathers elaborated generations ago, which have been almost forgotten over here — and which, in any case, are as exotic and as irrelevant to their real needs as a Buddhist pagoda in a New England village.

Missions can no longer be naïvely justified by the command attributed by early tradition to the risen Christ: "Go ye forth into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." They have to be justified by their fruits, and those fruits estimated by weighing the testimony of different classes of observers. There are at present over ten thousand missionaries from the United States alone in foreign countries, with some fifty thousand native helpers. Our people expend more than twenty-five million dollars a year in supporting them. Urgent appeals are continually made by the Missionary Boards for more workers, more money. The recent survey by the Interchurch movement directed attention to tracts

in Asia, Africa and South America where millions of natives are as yet unmissioned, and called for thirty-five hundred recruits within a year, for ten thousand recruits within five years. Young people are gathered together at great student conferences, and eloquent pulpit-orators do their best to stir them emotionally and get their pledge to devote their lives to this work. Those who go are among our choicest young men and women, those whose work and influence could be of enormous value in Christianizing our own land and solving the intricate and baffling problems of its muddled political and social order. If the drafting away of this army of our best and most devoted youths is to be justified, it must be by very great and indisputable results.

Hence we must listen thoughtfully when so keen an observer as Lord Curzon says, "There seems, at least to my mind, to be small doubt that the cause of Christianity is not advancing with a rapidity in the least commensurate with the prodigious outlay of money, self-sacrifice, and human power." We must realize that it is not so easy to gain converts as it once was, especially in the Asiatic lands, because of the rapid growth of national self-consciousness and the renewal of indigenous ideals. Missionary effort of the proselyting sort is bound to encounter heavier and heavier opposition — not persecution, as in the early days, but a silent resentment and antipathy which will be far more disastrous.

The Asiatic peoples have learned too much of western civilization in recent years to be able to idealize it. They are coming to see its unchristian industrial order, its imperialism in politics, its selfish, competitive scramble, its wanton luxury and worldliness. A feeling is growing up that their own evils are, after

all, no worse than those of Christendom. They find offensive the implication of missions, that their morals are inferior and in need of being replaced by Christian standards. The educated Hindoo or Japanese regards this attitude as insulting to the traditions and ideals of his homeland. The missionary is to him an impudent interloper, who had better mind his own business. Often, of course, there is a genuine appreciation of the earnestness and devotion of the missionary, often there is an amused tolerance of his bigotry, his partisan zeal, his desire to "save" the people among whom he comes to live. But often there is irritation and contempt. How can a Christian offer his religion to the Hindoo, whose land is held in subjugation by a Christian conqueror? How can he preach the virtues of Christianity to the Chinese, whose land has been the victim of the greed of one after another Christian nation? How can he have the nerve to try to "save" the Japanese, with their fierce racial pride, their passionately espoused codes of manners and morals, their sense of their national achievement?

This is clear: if missionary enterprise is to persist in these lands that are awakening to self-consciousness, it must be a different sort of missionarying from that of the old days. We cannot go to them proclaiming the sinfulness of their accepted standards and the lost state of their fathers and friends. We must recognize that their sacred books are full of sublime teachings, precepts as lofty as those in our own sacred Book. We must confess that if they have cruel and inhumane practices, so have we. We must be willing to work hand in hand with their growing spirit of nationalism, and help them to form churches suitable to their native aspirations and heritage. If

we go in this spirit, we shall be welcomed, and can accomplish much. We can help the Hindoos to mitigate their cruel and obstructive caste system, we can cultivate a higher attitude toward women in Japan, a revolt against "squeeze" in China. We can introduce hospitals, libraries, colleges and schools, teach modern conceptions of hygiene and sanitation. We can, in the doing of this, foster — not so much by preaching as by example — a spirit of brotherhood of kindness and charity, of service. We can try to arouse a new faith, a new zeal for a better world. All this is Christian service, and is well worth doing. It is just what, essentially, needs to be done in our own land. The question, which is most important to help in the regeneration of these other peoples or of our own is not easy to answer. Perhaps the need is greater there — though to any one who fully realizes the inhumanity and injustice in our own country that assertion can hardly be made with assurance. The choice must be left with the individual Christian where he shall work, at what point he shall seek to introduce the leaven of the spirit of Christ. It is needed everywhere,— in Asia, in Africa, in Europe, in our own United States.

Certainly the Christian Church must realize the spiritual kinship of all peoples, and seek to unite them rather than to accentuate divisions. It must endeavor not so much to convert their opinions as to elevate their lives; and in this task it can find ample opportunity for the missionary zeal which now too often brings discord and the clash of creeds in its train. We shall fraternize gladly with whatever other bodies of men are also seeking to make life better and nobler; we shall call Buddhist and Moham medan and Confucian not "heathen" but brothers.

if those religions can also purge themselves of their superstitions and assimilate, as Christianity is doing, the broadening ideals of humanity, we need not seek to proselyte from their ranks. Christianity at present is unquestionably the most alive and growing of religions; it is, as James Freeman Clarke used to say, the "great solvent." But if the religions of the East — now that the East too is waking up from her long slumber — show the capacity to liberalize themselves, to become as broadly representative of human interests, and as ardent in moral reform, we may well hesitate to foist our alien organization and traditions upon them. Religion should not divide men, it should unite them; and the name and ceremonial of a church matter little so long as the spirit of true religion is there.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

SHALL WE STAND BY THE CHURCH?

AND so we come to the final question : The Church being what it is, with such and such a history, with such and such hopes, shall we stand by it or shall we turn our backs upon it and leave it to the dogmatists, the traditionalists, the conformers? When I say "we," I address the growing number of Liberals, men and women of ideals and enlightenment, who will appraise and judge the Church as they would any other human institution.

Among Liberals, church-going is rapidly on the wane. Naturally enough, for they have abandoned many of the beliefs to which most churches still demand allegiance. They often feel that their attendance at church not only wastes their time, but puts their influence on the side of superstition, cant, confusion of thought; puts it also on the side of complacency with the existing order of society, and so actually retards the regeneration of that order. They are sorry to lose touch with what is good in the Church; but their fear of being put in a false position, and their impatience at the obscurantism, the credulity, the unenlightenment of the mass of church-people is decisive. They who feel thus are often those of the most scrupulous integrity, those who take these matters most seriously, and are most eager to put their weight in the right balance. There is much to be said for their decision.

Often, of course, the Liberal is *persona non grata* in the Church. But even if he is welcomed, he is likely to be little helped or inspired; dogmas which are preposterous to his mind are thrust at him as though it were a sin not to profess them. Even the spiritual truth that might feed his soul is offered to him in ways he cannot accept. The whole atmosphere is apt to be stifling and oppressive; the Church seems hopelessly behind the times, and the attitude of the best people towards it is largely, as Emerson said, "a hope and a waiting."

But there is another passage of Emerson's which may well be pondered. "Be not betrayed into undervaluing the churches which annoy you by their bigoted claims. . . . I agree with them more than I disagree. I agree with their heart and motive; my discontent is with their limitations and surface and language. Their statement is grown as fabulous as Dante's *Inferno*. Their purpose is as real as Dante's sentiment and hatred of vice." Little as existing churches often avail to help the aspiring soul, stale and narrow and uninspired as are many of their preachers, bigoted and form-ridden as are many of their members, the Church is in potentiality and not seldom in actuality the most potent for good of all human institutions.

From some points of view a new church, not calling itself Christian or encumbered with any load of tradition and superstition, would seem best to suit our needs. The Ethical Culture Society, unfortunate in the coldness of its name, but numbering among its members not a few earnest and spiritual men, is one attempt to supply the need. The Fellowship, organized some years ago in Los Angeles, and since renamed the Peoples' Church, has aroused considera-

ble enthusiasm. The so-called Positivist Church (Religion of Humanity) in England, the Union pour l'Action Morale in France — these are examples of the new organizations that have sprung up to take the place of the Christian Church. Bare they may seem and lacking in all the atmosphere of a church long established and endeared to the hearts of men. But that would mend itself in time; associations would gather, enthusiasm would grow with numbers, and traditions arise.

It sometimes happens that a new church, because it answers more exactly to the existing needs of men, can do more than one that has become petrified in old forms and has ceased to represent living impulses. It does not thrust the skeletons of ancient beliefs upon men; and by putting its truth in fresh and contemporary language it may touch new springs of emotion in them and reveal heights which they had not before glimpsed.

Mr. Henry Sturt, in his *Idea of a Free Church*, makes an eloquent plea for such a brand-new organization. It is quite possible that this century may see the founding of many new churches upon the basis of freedom of belief. But, after all, what a sad duplication of resources, what wastefulness of human effort, it would be! There are far too many organizations in the field already; if only they could all be persuaded to join forces, and make the basis of their united communion broad enough for every earnest and aspiring man and woman to feel at home in it, immeasurably more could be accomplished. The Christian Church, with her splendid historic background, her hold on the affections of the people — still very great in spite of the widespread chafing at her creeds — with her loyalty to the commanding

personality of Christ, has a momentum and a prestige that increase tenfold her power and usefulness.

It takes a happy inspiration and a peculiar combination of circumstances to launch successfully a new religion. Especially is this so if the new religion is not to be floated upon false hopes and supernatural glories. Religion is a natural growth, not a made-to-order article; the great spiritual seers — as Buddha, Christ, Luther — have been but reformers of pre-existing religions, and have retained more than they inaugurated. It is possible that a rational religion might be artificially built up and propagated, as an artificial and rational language might be — Esperanto is making some headway. But continuity counts for a great deal, and the old familiar languages and religions have the advantage. The likelihood is that if Christianity should remain stubbornly unprogressive the larger proportion of the population would cease to have any religion.

For many reasons it is earnestly to be hoped that the Christian Church will realize its opportunity and so alter its teaching as to become the church of the future. It has — to mention one — the inestimable advantage of an already widespread and powerful organization, large endowments, schools of the ministry, thousands of church buildings throughout the country. It would be an economic waste of considerable magnitude to leave the old church buildings to become gradually emptier and emptier and duplicate the expenditures that have produced such valuable property.

But more than that, the Christian Church has a stirring history behind it, a wealth of associations, a noble roll-call of heroes and martyrs, all that appeals to the imagination and to the heart. It has forms

and ceremonies, grown impressive through long use, that can be adapted for the future. It has, in spite of considerable lack of touch with modern thought, a deep hold on the affections of the people; it inspires an instinctive reverence and awe. It has already at hand formed habits of churchgoing, meetings for prayer and Christian endeavor, everything that cultivates the religious life. All that it needs is to drop, like an outgrown shell, its obsolete dogmas and its irritating dogmatism.

We reckon our calendar from the birth of Christ; Christmas is our chief holiday. The Christian pulpit is the place, among Aryan peoples, from which to teach ideals and spiritualize life. The Christian Church will persist, whether it oppose scientific teaching or no; it has too much momentum behind it, it is too splendid, too deep-rooted in our civilization, to die. The only safeguard against its pernicious and choking influence upon the spread of sound ideas of life lies in its liberalization. A new church would give spiritual help to a small class of the enlightened, but would leave the old church still to oppress the minds of the many; we should have the same sorry spectacle of a great and venerable institution offering food for the spirit, but opposing the spread of knowledge.

If, then, the Christian Church has the best vantage-point from which to work, the immediate need is to make prevalent that interpretation of Christianity which shall enable it to draw all earnest men to its fold and unite them in a task that requires our utmost and united efforts. Let us who have hesitated as to our duty boldly proclaim ourselves Christians: not skeptics, for we do not doubt the importance of Christian ideals; not infidels, if we are not unfaithful to

those ideals; not opponents of Christianity, for he alone really opposes Christianity who teaches worldliness, license, self-indulgence. We who read with discriminating eyes the ancient pages of Scripture can find inspiration there as well as those whose religion depends on their misunderstanding them. We who see with the clearer vision of modern historical research the noble figure of Jesus can acknowledge him as our Master no less reverently than those who read their mediæval dogmas into his teaching and personality. We who love the Christian Church, whose hearts are naturally loyal to her symbols, carrying on the spiritual warfare that she has so long waged, should keep our home within her sanctuary and call ourselves by the great name — Christian.

Man needs not only religion — he needs *a* religion. Our religion will be none the less a rational and universally human religion from having a local habitation and a name. It may well be that a man cannot find in the churches near him any inspiration, any new breadth of vision or insight into his problems; that is his misfortune. But it may also be his opportunity. Let him heartily enter some church, give of his own ardor and experience, and help make it the source of power it should be. The good that he can do may seem infinitesimal, and not worth the waste of time and the irksome attendance at a service with which he is only half in sympathy. It is like the duty to vote, which by so many busy men is neglected because one ballot more or less among the thousands counts so little. But elections are lost that way; and churches are lost, are given over to the narrow-minded and illiberal, dwindle in number, lose their effectiveness. And so those of the community who are not fortunate in their home influences grow

up with practically no training in the duties of life, no thought and no interest in spiritual things.

No matter, then, if churchgoing appear a burden and a hardship, if it give us little meat for our souls; no matter if we feel at times in a false position and seem to stand for beliefs we cannot hold: these are small sacrifices for so great an end. Let us check our impatience at the ignorance, the narrowness, the dogmatism that we find there; let us give of our knowledge and enthusiasm, and join humbly with all those, whatever their belief, who strive for the spirit of Christ and seek to live the Christian life. For these things are incomparably more important than those other things; all who believe in that spirit and that life are our brothers, and what we have in common is far greater than our differences. If we go, not in the critical spirit, or merely seeking to get something for ourselves, but because we sympathize with those who are striving to live purely, and wish for fellowship with them, because we wish to give our mite of strength and influence to what is, after all, the greatest force in the world for righteousness, and to help in the making of it more and more such a force — if we go in this spirit, we shall hardly fail to be the better for it ourselves.

We may recall the words of Mill: "If all were to desert the Church who put a large and liberal construction on its terms of communion, or who would wish to see those terms widened, the national provision for religious teaching and worship would be left utterly to those who take the narrowest, the most literal, and purely textual view of the formularies. Therefore, if it were not an impertinence in me to tender advice in such a matter, I should say, let all who conscientiously can remain in the Church. A

church is far more easily improved from within than from without."

A lady once told Huxley that, as she did not believe the Athanasian Creed, she had got up and left church when the minister began to read it. "Now, Mr. Huxley, don't you think I was quite right to mark my disapproval?" "My dear lady," said Huxley, "I should as soon think of rising and leaving your table because I disapproved of one of the entrées."

If the Church is not to be more and more a force for reaction and stupidity, if it is not to continue the decay which in many quarters seems to be begun, if it is to develop along the liberal lines that are in many other quarters being manifested, if it is going to be anything like the power for good it might be in the world, we must not desert it in this time of stress. We owe it to the future — if there seems to be no present good to be attained — to stay by it, and not to leave it to the ultra-conservative and bigoted. The church is as necessary an institution as the school or the public library. If it is not what it ought to be, it is for us to keep working until we make it what it ought to be.

One of many contemporary expressions of this spirit may be found in an article contributed anonymously to the *Outlook* a few years ago by a worker in St. George's Church, New York City. "I am," the writer says, "or at least I try to be, a man. To that end I endeavor to be courageous, truthful, and considerate of others. At St. George's and in its work I find an atmosphere which stimulates me in this effort and helps me to refurbish ideals which are tarnished by the acid gases that are constantly generated by the struggle for existence. . . . The theories of the Church with regard to the supernatural or the trans-

cidental interest me not at all. I regard the Christian Church in its entirety, including both Catholics and Protestants, as the most beneficent organization society has yet devised for the promotion of altruism and morality. I feel that St. George's is the most virile and congenial arm of that organization with which I have come in contact. I am conscious that it helps me as I have stated, and that it inspires me with a desire to help others.

"I am therefore glad to do what I can in my humble way to forward the work in which St. George's is engaged, and feel it a privilege to attend its services, although I am not confirmed, do not go to Communion, and would be guilty of intellectual hypocrisy if I repeated the Creed or joined in the petitions and declarations of the Prayer Book.

"I am writing this because my observation leads me to believe that many other laymen feel as I do in regard to questions of theology. . . . Such men no longer identify themselves with the Church, and are leaving it in large numbers, because they feel that they will be hypocritical and so regarded if they join in the work of an organization that professes to believe some theories which they cannot accept.

"These same men are nevertheless anxious to do good, to help their fellowmen, and to live clean, honest, and healthful lives.

"To such men I would say that . . . a literal acceptance of its creeds and theology has become impossible for most people. They need not, however, be thereby deterred from joining in its humanitarian work if they think that it is worth while. No suspicion of hypocrisy will rest upon them for so doing."

It is not, however, merely for the sake of those whom we can help through the Church, or for the sake

of the Church itself, but for our own sakes. Religion tends to languish in those to whom the traditional dogmatic expression of it has become impossible. Such persons are much too ready to acquiesce in isolation as a necessary result of their opinions. "It is surely a weakness, when we are not pressed for our opinions, to make so much of them to other people, or to ourselves, as to be excluded or to exclude ourselves from joining in a common activity, the spirit of which we inwardly reverence and would gladly make our own, while in separation we are almost certain to lose it." ¹

It is a critical time for religion. Fact and illusion have been so long intertwined, religion has come to be so closely associated with particular world-views, that the decay of the latter threatens to involve the decay of the former also. Now, if ever, must we cling firmly to the great and ultimate realities of life. Let each man who has moved away from the traditional doctrines be zealous that he fail not in his life; rather let his righteousness exceed that of these others; let him be sterner with himself, more instant and inflexible in denying his lower nature, in refusing to give way to self-indulgence or greed; that all may see that clearness of sight and fervor of heart are not incompatible. Let it be seen that the danger to religion lies not in any change of beliefs, but in that sluggish indifference which may consort with any belief, that worldliness and pleasure-seeking to which we are more and more tempted by the very advance and betterment of our material civilization.

Let the pessimism and vulgarity that flaunt themselves in our literature be branded for what they are, not the unfortunate result of irreligion, but irreligion

¹ T. H. Green, *Faith*.

itself. Let the finger of condemnation be pointed at the rake, the trifler, the unscrupulous merchant, the dirty politician. Let every man in his private and in his public life keep clean and honest and upright; let him not relax his moral vigor or be afraid of hard work, of poverty, or of pain; let him not become effeminate, luxury-loving, immersed in selfish ease. The Church stands there to tell us that there is something higher and better than ourselves to live for, something unspeakably great and worthy of our utmost endeavors and our entire allegiance: that we can rise above our own petty failures and disappointments in the thought of serving, at however humble a post, in the greatest of all causes — of which all worthy causes, all good work, and every loving deed form a living part — the service of humanity, which is the service of God. And in that service, according to the measure of our devotion, we shall find peace.

The future of the Church should be to us all a matter of grave anxiety. Will the reactionary forces win the day and the Church stand opposed to the intellectual enlightenment which science is forcing upon the world? If so, her doom is sounded. She will undoubtedly persist, with recurrent revivals of ardor, into the indefinite future. But she will cease gradually to be a vital force in the world; and meanwhile, for a long time, the unhappy conflict of ideals, between intellectual honesty and spiritual fervor, will continue to tear the hearts of earnest men and divide their allegiance. Worst of all, until men succeed in building upon a rational foundation a great new religion, and until it attains the prestige of numbers and of age, there will be increasing danger of irreligion, of every form of license and excess. If, on the other hand, the Church will but admit freely the new

knowledge of our times, realize her true function as guardian not of the cosmological ideas, but of the moral ideals of mankind, and maintain more and more vigorously her inspiring and wisely repressive influence over conduct, we may look for the time when all men of good-will shall reënter her fold and Christendom shall again be a name synonymous with "the Western World."

This is surely one of the most momentous issues of our times. It is momentous in that the outcome will affect the intellectual status of the generations yet unborn, will decide whether their minds shall be filled with theological fictions or with scientific verities. It is far more momentous in that it will affect the religious life of those generations. If "orthodoxy," even in some modified and expurgated form, wins the day in the churches, more and more men will be driven from them, and the likelihood is that a large proportion of mankind for an indefinite time to come will be without that moral impetus which a great organized church can impart.

The Church of the future must present the great duties of life free from dogmatism and doubtful assertion, must give us those truths which are grounded in the very nature and conditions of human life un-mixed with what is unproved or irrational. Will the Christian Church do this for us, will it adapt itself to man's clearing intellectual horizon and maintain its spiritual leadership, or must we henceforth seek elsewhere our guidance and inspiration? Are its progressive and liberal tendencies going to win the day, or will the forces of conservatism and reaction prove the stronger? That is the great religious question of the near future. The Christian Church is engaged in a struggle to the death between

the forces that make for such a liberalization of religion and those that make for reaction. On the outcome of this struggle depend our hopes — whether we, and our descendants, may come to her for our guidance, or whether we must look elsewhere.

The present situation is far from satisfactory. But there are many hopeful signs. If the Church shall finally come to walk hand in hand with science, it may bring wisdom into religion and religion into everyday work in a degree unknown hitherto. From this alliance should spring types of spiritual life larger and finer than those which the old faith, so sweet, but so narrow, could engender. A church that based its teaching wholly upon indubitable facts and a rational conception of the universe could become in fullest degree the inspiration and guide of humanity. The Christian Church could be the rallying-place in the fight against all forms of evil, the joy and consolation of all those who long to forget their own petty lives in something finer and larger. Here could the lonely of heart find welcome and fellowship, the ignorant and groping find counsel and direction from wisdom and experience. As in the early Christian era, so again the Church's triumphs would be our triumph and her life our life; to her we would gladly give our strength and in her service realize the meaning of our common brotherhood.

Some of the Christian churches are rapidly approaching this ideal. But there are strong forces at work for a narrower interpretation of religion. It is a crucial epoch in the history of Christianity. If the Church fails to rise to its opportunity and make the necessary readjustment, there is yet long strife and bitterness before us, and the union of earnest men against the powers of darkness will be long delayed.

A Christianity such as we have described has never yet been realized on earth — who knows how it might transform the world! Has the Christian Church vitality and power of growth enough to meet its opportunity, or will its potentialities remain undeveloped and its prestige count more and more on the side of reaction and division? The future of religion among us hangs in the balance, and with it, in no inconsiderable degree, the future of humanity.

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J. Jenkins

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